

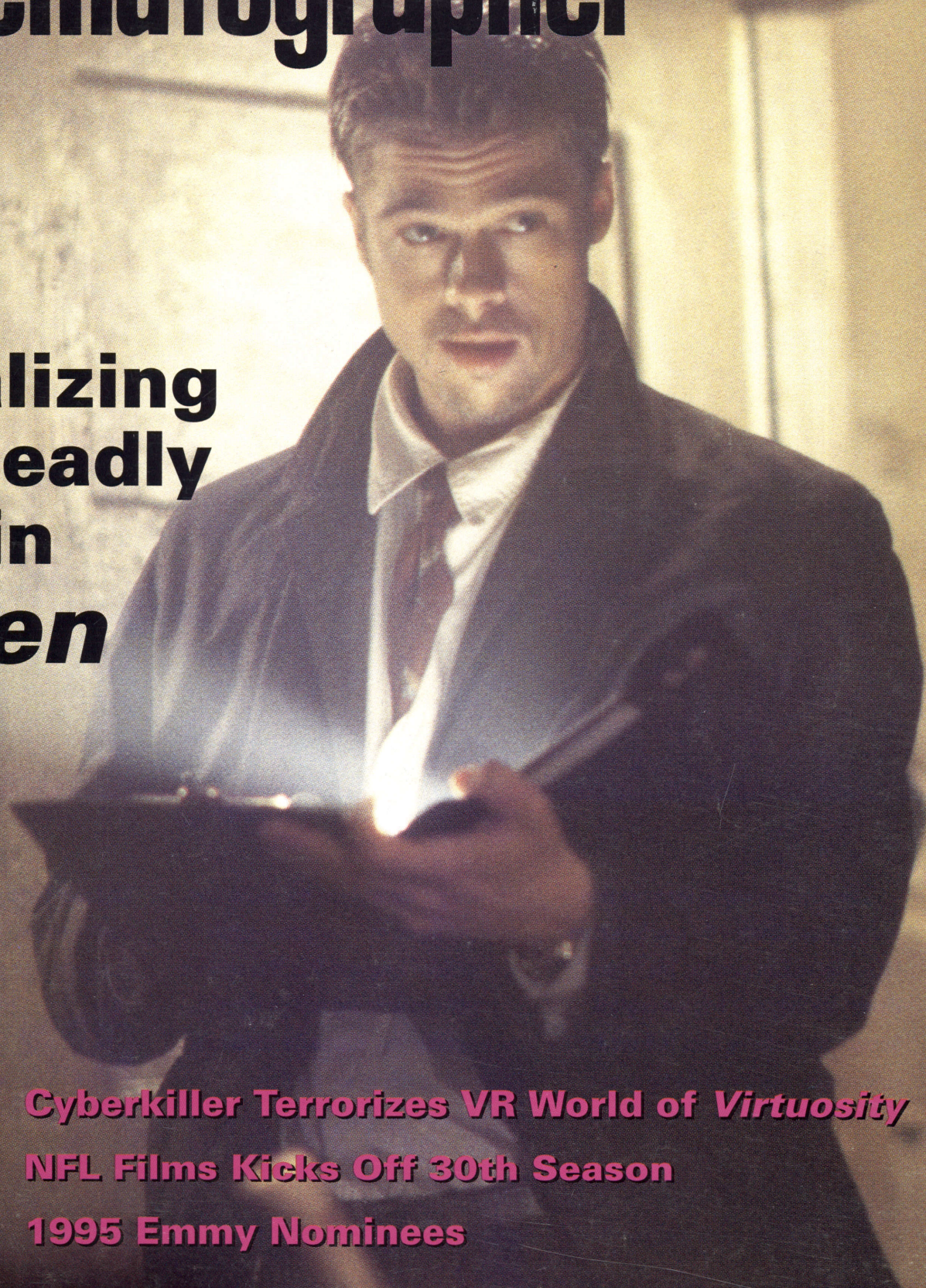
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# American Cinematographer

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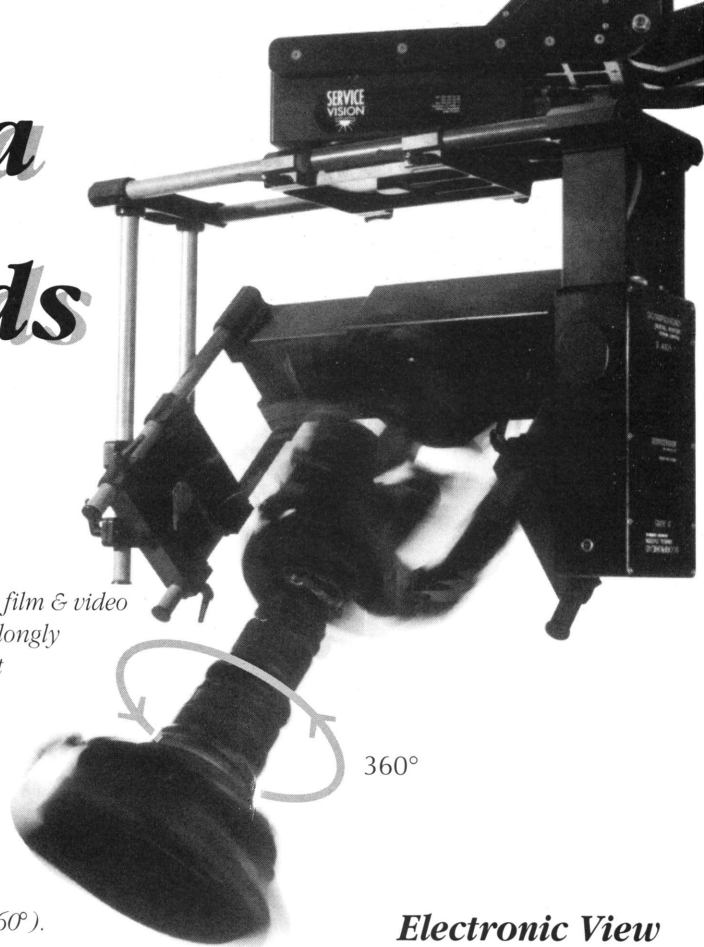
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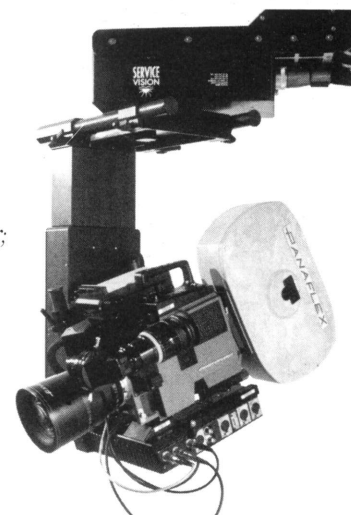
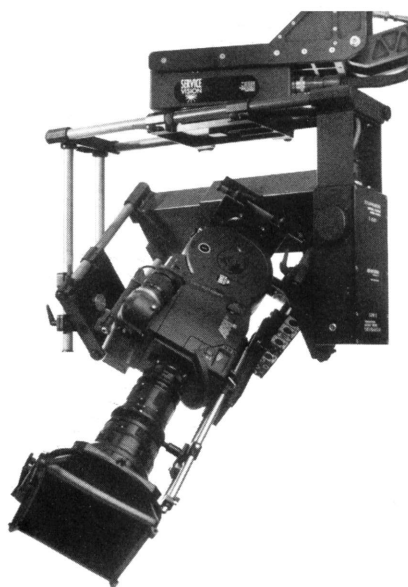


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**On Our Cover:** In *Seven*, photographed by cinematographer Darius Khondji, a young police detective (Brad Pitt) attempts to shed light on a brutal rash of killings based on the Seven Deadly Sins (photo by Peter Sorel).

**Contributing Authors:**

Vincent LoBrutto, Chris Pizzello, Chris Probst, Fred Szebin





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October 1995 Vol. 76, No. 10

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# Denny & Terry Clairmont on the Angenieux 25-250HR.

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"The resolving power of the HR is incredible—all the way through the range," Denny explains.

"And through nearly two years of rentals, the Angenieux 10-to-1's have proven to be really durable—whether on a sound stage or on location."

Terry glances at the busy scheduling board behind him. Every HR slot is filled. "It's the lens they're asking for. So we just ordered another 31 HRs to go with our shipment of new cameras."

"That doubles our HR inventory," adds Denny, "You might say we're committed to the lens."

In a minute Terry turns back to the scheduling board. Denny heads to the projection room to check out some new lenses.



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**“T**he movie is about two brothers, both firefighters. We didn’t know exactly what to expect in the various fire scenes,” says Mikael Salomon, “So Clairmont built two different housings for us.”

**More time  
means more heat**

“One was water-cooled, the other not. The non-water-cooled weighed less; the water-cooled would protect the camera longer. *Time* is the enemy, as well as heat. The longer a fire burns, the hotter it gets, of course.”

**Fifty burners  
take time to light**

“Some of the *Backdraft* fires had fifty burners going, spraying propane, map gas and diesel fuel. You couldn’t ignite them all simultaneously. By the time they were all lit, the heat had already built up.”

**Chimney effect**

“It’s hotter directly above the flames, obviously; hottest of all is inside a chimney. We hung the Firebox in an elevator shaft, looking straight down. Twenty feet below was a fireball across which a stuntman had to jump. Flames about ten feet high, leaping up the shaft at the lens.”

Mikael Salomon’s DP credits include *The Abyss*, *Always*, *Arachnophobia* and *Far and Away*. He recently directed the feature *A Far-off Place* and he was 2nd Unit Director on the feature *Congo*. Ian Fox is now an Operator. His credits include *Jungle Book*, *Waterworld*, *Twister* and *Mighty Ducks 3*.

Photo: Mikael Salomon and Firebox



# Director of Photography Mikael Salomon ASC talks about using the two Clairmont Fireboxes while shooting *Backdraft*

## Fire close up

"The biggest *Backdraft* fire took place in a chemical factory. For one shot, we laid a trail of glue from a chemical drum to the Firebox. After the drum exploded, the fire raced toward the camera along that glue trail. As it hit, we set off another bomb next to the Firebox, throwing flaming glue over it."

## Temperature reading

"Clairmont put a maximum temperature indicator inside each Firebox," says Mr. Salomon. "We ended up using just the lighter weight, non-water-cooled box. At the end of shooting, the indicator read only 105 degrees."

## What fits into the Fireboxes:

Both boxes are designed to work with the ARRI 3, using its standard 400 foot (or 200 foot) magazine and prime lenses from 14mm to 135mm. The C.E. crystal base fits inside, as do the batteries. You can run at any crystal speed from 4 to 130 fps. And you can vary the speed during the shot.

## Remote control including Power Pod

Inside the lightweight housing, there's also room for (and connections for) a Power Pod multiplex plate. With or

without the multiplexer, you get remote control of start/stop, focus and iris, with *two* cables—one for backup. There are also two video tap connectors, for backup or multiple use.

## Substantial

The Fireboxes aren't crash housings, but they are substantial: Empty, the non-water-cooled box weighs 66 lbs; the water-cooled weighs 104 lbs.

**"The Firebox was in shot.  
So we hid it from the other cameras by  
surrounding it with flames."**

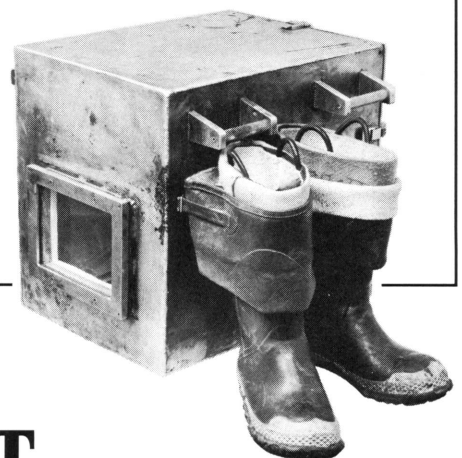
## Nine cameras

"We had nine cameras covering one fire scene," says First Assistant Ian Fox. "We put the Firebox in close, which meant it was in the shot for five or six of the other cameras."

## Burn marks

"So we poured glue all around the Firebox and let it burn for a minute before

rolling any of the cameras. The flames hid the box. The black marks on the housing are burnt glue."



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## Letters

### Begging to Differ with Anti-CG Readers . . .

I look forward to reading your Letters column each month, but from time to time I find it difficult not to take issue with some of the views expressed by my fellow readers. The most recent case in point is a letter titled "Not Impressed with CG Direction" (*AC* July), addressing *AC*'s current reporting of postproduction techniques, including digital effects.

As a producer, I am hard pressed to remember a cinematographer or director in recent times who was not, at least peripherally, concerned with the elements affecting the negative once it leaves the lab. In today's world of emerging, and perhaps more important, merging technologies, the cinematographer's and director's knowledge of telecine and digital posting techniques serve to help them achieve their creative goals during the production process.

I would also venture to say that most would agree that as more avenues become available for distribution of the finished product (such as home satellite services and interactive and special venues), a thorough understanding of these factors will become essential. . . maybe even someday as important as a cinematographer's understanding of cameras, lenses, lighting and film stocks. Just ask Doug Trumbull or James Cameron, only two of the many who have made substantial investments in the future of these technologies.

As for reporting on films made outside the Hollywood system, I've always felt that *AC* has represented these efforts in a fair and equitable manner.

As we approach the new millennium, I can understand how many might feel intimidated by the barrage of technological advances before us. Still, I can't help but feel that this is one of the things which attracts so many of us to this industry . . . finding new and better ways to manipulate the visual image. If

that weren't the case, we'd all be selling insurance!

— Adam Rogers,  
Miami, FL

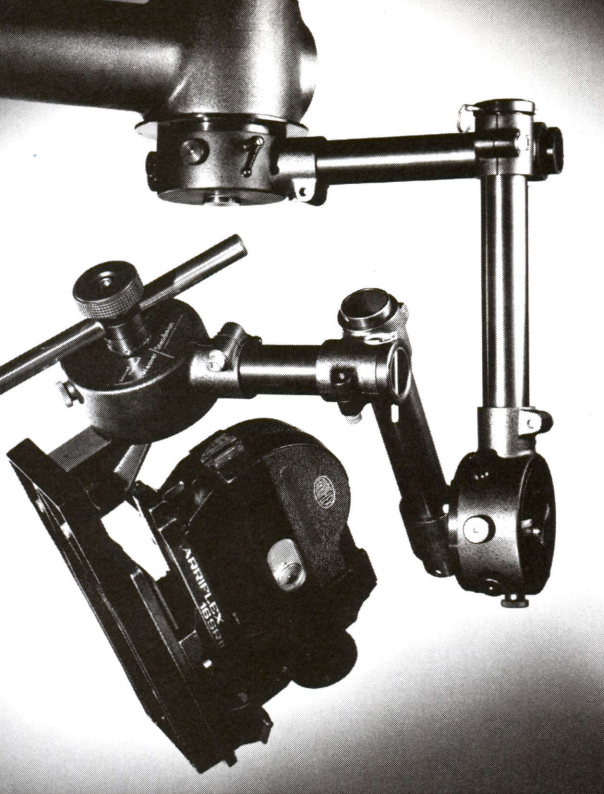
### . . . and with Negroponte's Digital Vision

I don't agree with Jim Palmer's 100% endorsement of Nicholas Negroponte's view of the future. The strength of Negroponte's vision lies in his grasp of the infinite flexibility of digital technologies, what one might call the gestalt of digital, its long-term promise. Unfortunately, he is much less helpful on the practical aspects of implementation, getting from A to B.

Take 16:9 for instance. Mr. Palmer should check with dealers for what he calls "an infinitely malleable software-based display that will adapt to the source material at hand." He won't find any because that's vapourware for now, but he will find 16:9 displays, particularly in Europe — where over 20 broadcasters are already transmitting 16:9 services — and in Japan, where 1994 sales of 16:9 sets were 1.5 million units, set to double this year. The point is that without agreement on 16:9, broadcasters and manufacturers probably would stick with 4:3. Agreement provides market confidence for a difficult transition involving several industry sectors. Someone had to make investment decisions on retooling a glassworks; someone had to make decisions on which aspect ratios to include in the specification for the MPEG 2 decompression chips.

Don't consider 16:9 as the end of the road; it's a stage towards the flexibility and choice we all want. It has unfortunately been misunderstood in the pages of *American Cinematographer*; no one is forcing anyone to shoot movies in 16:9. Aesthetically, watching *Lawrence of Arabia* on TV in 16:9 the other night was undeniably closer to David Lean and Freddie Young's original vision than the amputated 4:3 version, even if the pic-



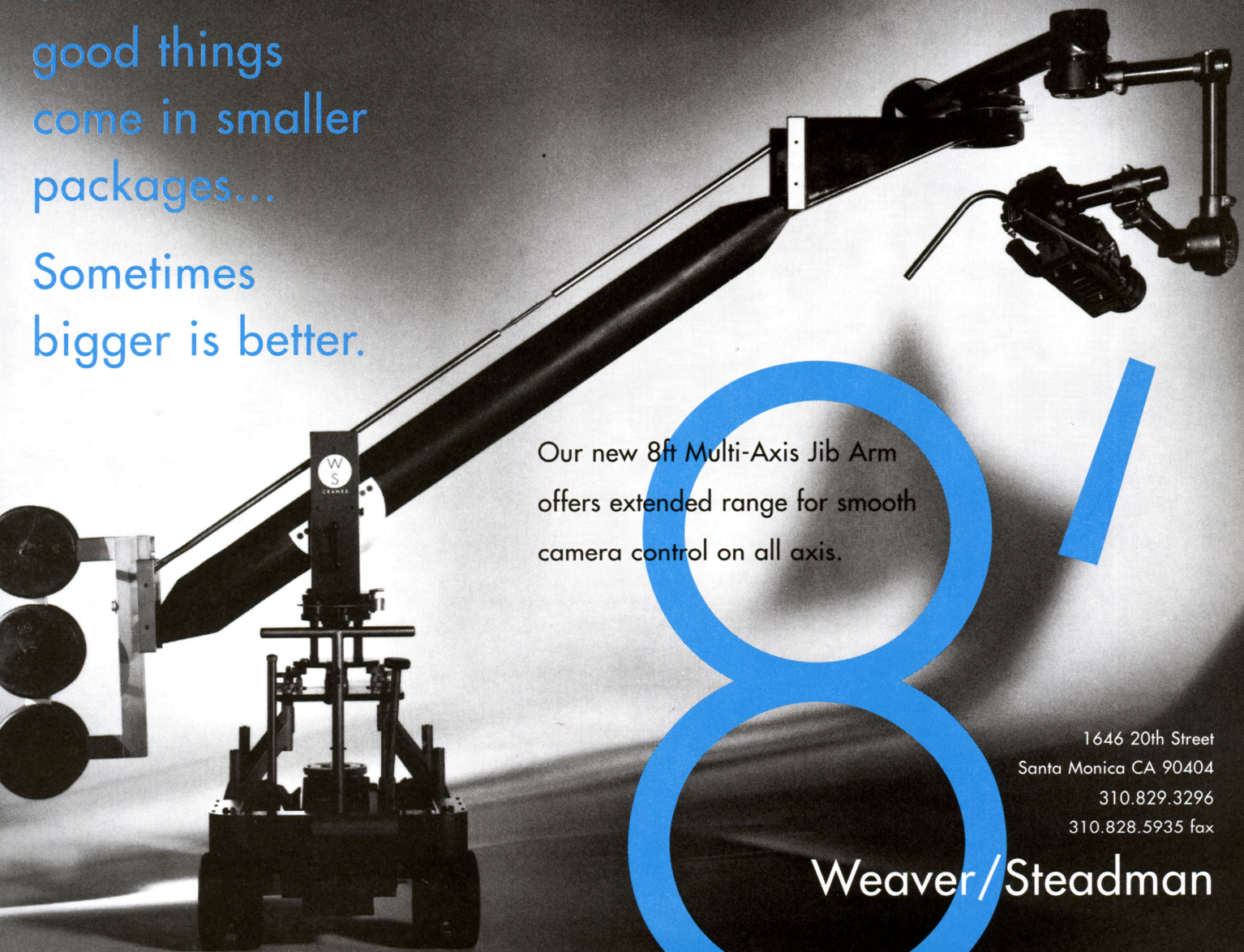


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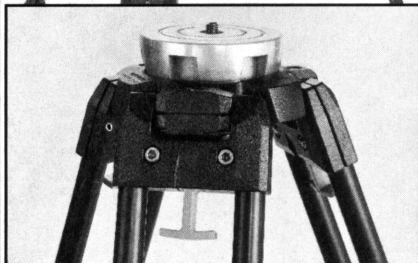
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tures weren't quite as wide as the restored Super Panavision III print we all saw in theaters a year or two ago. 16:9 is here today and it doesn't rule out having the extra camels later, when means permit.

I do share Negroponte's impatience with traditional standardization procedures. The core standardization dilemmas are: how much detail do you need and how long is implementation going to take; the greater the detail, the more options have to be closed off or the greater the expense to cover them all; the longer the implementation period, the greater the risk of obsolescence before the system is introduced. Therefore, he is probably right about the Grand Alliance HDTV system. My own analysis is that broadcasters in the U.S. and Europe seem infatuated for now with the possibilities of multiple-channel digital, so none of them really wants to introduce HDTV — which is much more expensive than multiple-channel. Even if consumers might be quite interested in the increased impact of big-screen presentation, no one wants to offer it.

By the time the market requires HDTV, it may have to be rethought in terms closer to Nicholas Negroponte's long-term view. However, bear in mind what the English economist Keynes said of investment and commercial life in general: "In the long term we are all dead." The future is an incremental process, rather than a one-off revelation. Don't confuse stages on the way with the final destination, particularly with a process as complicated as convergence, where many industry sectors are involved and may be traveling different routes towards the same destination. I am sure that Nicholas Negroponte and Jim Parker do not believe that convergence consists of Hollywood, the consumer electronics business, the telecom companies and all the others just doing what the computer industry tells them to!

— Ivo Addams  
London

#### Sherpa-less Adventurer Praises Everest Effort

Jeez, I thought /was nuts, carrying 15 pounds of camera gear over 2,000 miles and hundreds of mountains to produce the first-ever 16mm film on the world-famous Appalachian Trail. Never mind that I was pelted by rain, snow, sleet, and hail, and nearly struck

by lightning. Forget the poisonous snakes, bears, wild dogs, weirdos, and, worst of all, lack of funding that I confronted.

David Breashear's planned climb of Everest (*AC* August) with a 48-pound Imax camera reduces all my effort to the scale of a backyard stroll. If he pulls it off, I will be first in line to see the result. Thanks for a great article!

— Thomas Hogeboom  
Walden, Vermont

#### Suggestion for Waterworld-sized Movies

Aside from [August's] two pieces on Imax films, which I very much want to see, there's precious little mention of 70mm being used any more. This cannot be for lack of stories, as a great many films are shot Super 35 and printed to 70mm for release. What is the logic behind not using 70mm film to shoot with?

I don't believe it's cost. The budgets for these epics strike me as necessitating big-scale film stock. I also don't believe it's due to the format's cumbersome — this magazine is full of stories of heroic cinematographers and grip crews going beyond the call of sanity to get the shots. You need only read of the 3-D Imax film to see that.

Something's happening when characterization, good storytelling, and maybe even a little revelation (when the audience learns something about itself) is relegated to the little pictures (which mercifully do get made and released), while everyone else makes big-budgeted action flicks in which the stars are the stunt crew, the special effects team, the CG artists and the production designers.

If a studio's got a reported \$175 million to throw at a film, let's make it something worth throwing money at and shoot accordingly: 65mm neg in the camera.

I realize that this situation is not always of a cinematographer's making or within his/her control. However, this is the only venue I know of where people will read these words.

— Roger Brown,  
Gibsons, BC

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Please send any letters, comments, suggestions, thoughts, etc. to [ASCMAG@aol.com](mailto:ASCMAG@aol.com).



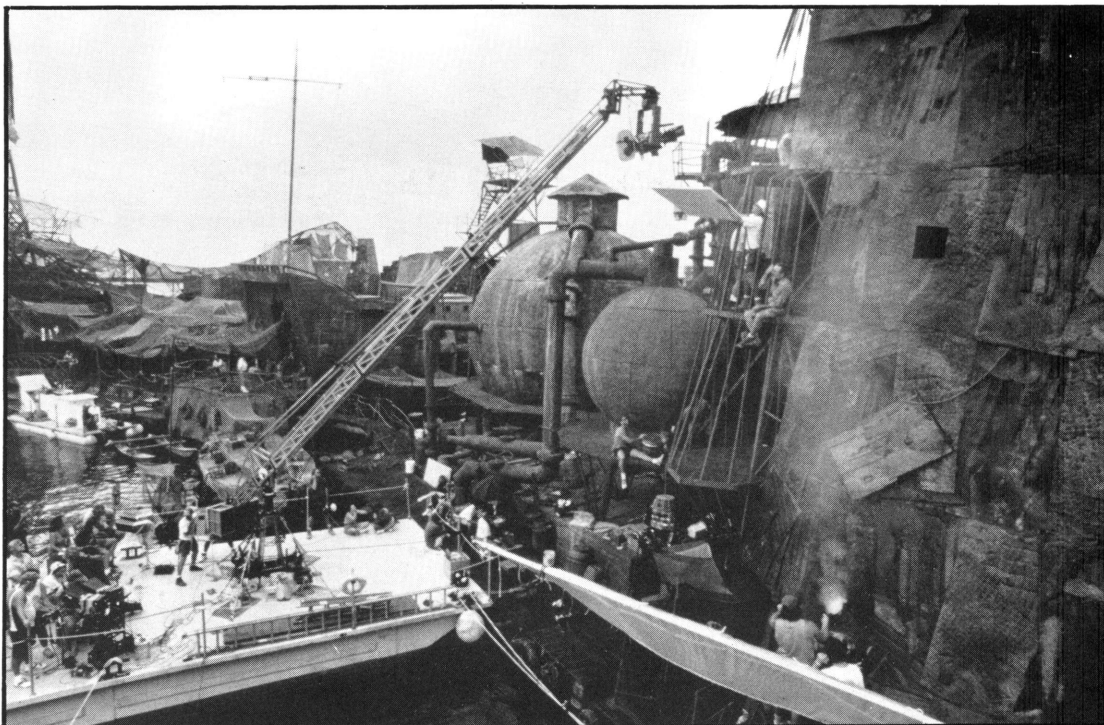


Photo by Ben Glass, courtesy of Universal City Studios

"The stress on its pivot-point  
is normally tremendous..."  
says *Waterworld* Director of  
Photography Dean Semler  
of the barge-mounted  
**Pegasus Remote III crane,**

"...but what if you suddenly  
introduce a strong lateral  
force to that? You always level  
your cranes, but you can't  
level a boat. Its going to be  
twisting even in one-foot  
waves, So what happens to  
your camera 34 feet out?"

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out by testing the Pegasus  
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# Caucus Symposium Focuses on Future of Television

by Bob Fisher

In 1961 Newton Minow was the chairman of the FCC and keynote speaker at the NAB conference in Las Vegas. Even if you don't recall his name, you'll recognize his words. They've become an idiom for what's wrong with TV.

Minow dared the audience to spend a day looking at what they aired.

"Keep your eyes glued to that set when it goes on the air until the station signs off," he said. "I can assure you that you will observe a vast wasteland."

Some 34 years later, those words still resonate. Minow was a panelist at a June 14 symposium titled *Television: Its Impact on Society*. The event was co-sponsored by the Caucus of Producers, Writers and Directors and Eastman Kodak Company. The venue was the main theater at the Directors Guild of America, in Los Angeles.

Early in the day, before the formal program began, reporters flocked to Minow. One asked him what, if anything,

had changed since his famous keynote address. He replied, "I used to be concerned that television wasn't living up to its promise for my children. Now, I fear that it could harm my grandchildren."

During the formal portion of the symposium, Minow had some kinder things to say about television. At one point, he called it "the most important educational institution in the country." Minow backed those words up by noting that television has popularized the "designated driver" concept. He quoted a Mediascope survey which indicated that 96 percent of the people who know about designated drivers got their information from television. Minow also pointed out that closed captions have taught millions of people how to speak English.

The real problem, he said, is that "The good guys — the people with a conscience — are here today. . . too many other people in the TV business have limited horizons."

Minow was referring to the fact that despite an all-star cast of panelists, and a hot topic which affects about a third of the jobs in the Hollywood entertainment industry, the audience for the symposium had maxed out at between 250 to 300 people — about 40 of whom were members of the press. One of the trade dailies emphasized the "sparse audience" in their coverage.

That amplified a point made by keynote speaker Howard Stringer, who noted that many critics pay more attention to ratings than the quality of TV programs.

Producer-entrepreneur Chuck Fries, who chaired the event, noted that the symposium should likewise be judged by the quality of the dialogue, and its outcome, and not by the number of people in the audience.

The Caucus was founded 21 years ago by a handful of hyphenates, including Fries. Their goal was to provide

## ASC Urges FCC To Consider Its Proposal For Advanced TV

LOS ANGELES, CA. — "Don't exclude filmmakers from the process of determining standards for a future advanced television system for the United States." Victor Kemper, president of the American Society of Cinematographers, sent that blunt message to Federal Communications Commission Chairman Reed Hundt in a letter dated July 17th.

Kemper noted that some 18 months have passed since the ASC issued a statement calling for the FCC to adopt a "truly filmic" 2:1 width-to-height aspect ratio for the advanced digital television system it is planning. The ASC's proposal also specifies displaying motion pictures the way they are meant to be seen, in their native as-

pect ratios at 24 frames per second.

Kemper expressed concern that the FCC is moving forward with plans for an advanced television system without considering the ASC's proposal. He said that the Advisory Committee on Advanced Television Services (ACATS) has simply ignored concerns expressed by both the creative community and many people in the computer industry.

Kemper noted that Gary Demos, a consultant to the Apple Computer Advanced Technology Group, was rebuffed when he attempted to address this issue at ACATS hearings in Washington, D.C. on July 13 and 14. He pointed out that Demos is uniquely qualified to address this issue. Demos pio-

neered the use of digital technology in the motion picture industry during the early 1980s on such films as *Tron*. He is an outspoken advocate for compatibility between digital TV and computers used for interactive, multimedia applications.

Demos said that many in the computer industry generally agree with the ASC proposal because it is compatible with requirements for the National Information Infrastructure (or "information superhighway") advocated by Vice President Albert Gore.

"[Demos] was basically told that he is wasting his time, because a decision has already been made in favor of a 1.78:1 aspect ratio, more commonly

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# GU CHANGWEI ON FILM

"I am not an extrovert, so it is difficult for me to express what I think and feel. Shooting a new film is like beginning a long journey on a ship with an unknown destination. You don't know where it will take you, but you look forward to the journey. When I was shooting *In the Heat of the Sun*, (director) Jiang Wen wanted the audience to feel like they were inside the movie... to feel empathy for the characters. We wanted the audience to share in the experience of being a young person in China during the Cultural Revolution. We wanted to touch their hearts... make them think about what they were seeing, and feel emotions that made them want to laugh or cry. The new film technology is important, because it gives me more freedom to express myself. With each new development, I have more space to work in. A simple thing like a ray of sunlight coming through a window into a dark room can reveal a great deal about a character. I believe you must be born with a talent for cinematography. The rest you can learn through experiences in your life, at school and your work. I studied fine art. I wanted to be a painter, but I also wrote scripts and poetry. Many classmates wanted to become directors. I knew from the beginning that cinematography was the only possible choice for me."

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九五年七月十八日

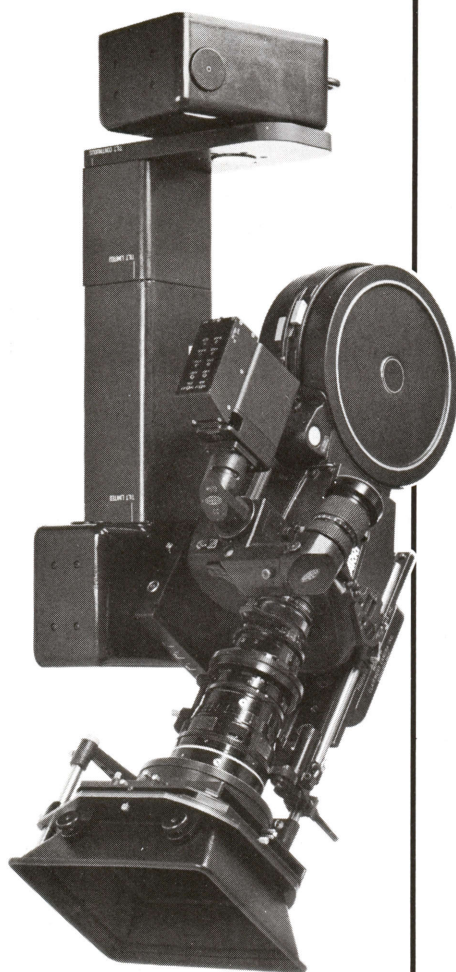
Gu Changwei's credits include *In the Heat of the Sun*, *Red Sorghum*, *Ju Dou*, *King of the Children*, *Life on a String*, *The Trail* and *Farewell My Concubine*, which earned a 1993 Oscar® nomination. His current film, *Warrior Lanling*, is based on a 5,000 year old story adapted for the screen by director Sherwood Xuehua Hu.



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a forum where television professionals could discuss issues of common interest. There are 239 Caucus members today, and steering committee chairman Bill Blinn estimates that they collectively play roles in producing more than half of the prime-time evening programming on the main networks and cable systems. Blinn noted that many if not most prime time episodic programs and MOWs are seen by more people in one evening than the vast majority of movies during their entire runs at theaters. Much of it is sooner or later seen by many millions of other people overseas and in syndication in the U.S.

There was an assumption by many journalists that the symposium was a response to the recent attack on the entertainment industry by Senate majority leader and presidential candidate Robert Dole (R-Kansas). Blinn said that the symposium was actually planned many months earlier, and was designed to be an outreach program designed to foster a broad dialogue in the TV community. The goal was to encourage a more direct assumption of responsibility for both the quality and diversity of programming by the people who create and air the shows.

"We are acutely aware of our responsibilities," said Blinn. "Television comes into our homes too, and sometimes the programming offends our families."

referred to as 16:9," Kemper said. "We believe that thinking is flawed. The fact is that a 16:9 aspect ratio does not serve the best interests of either the public or the television industry. It is based on the limitations of 10-year-old analog technology. Our government shouldn't expect the TV industry or public to invest billions of dollars in outmoded technology. Locking into a comparatively narrow picture area also violates the artistic integrity of filmmakers who create the majority of prime-time entertainment for television."

The ASC is widely regarded as the authoritative voice speaking for the art of cinematography. It was founded in 1919 for the purpose of advancing the art of filmmaking.

"In September 1993, we formed an ad hoc committee to study this issue and to make recommenda-

Blinn noted that Sen. Dole and various other politicians, including President Bill Clinton and Vice President Albert Gore, were invited to participate in the symposium months before it was held. All professed scheduling conflicts. Also absent were spokespersons for the ad industry, who had also been asked to take part.

Ad agencies and sponsors were apportioned a major share of responsibility for both the sameness of television and also for their failure to support high-quality programs.

By the end of the day, "the tyranny of numbers" was a metaphor for describing the sponsor-ad agency insistence on an 18 to 49 age bracket demographic and 20 share of audience as the price for supporting prime-time network programming.

CBS executive vice president David Poltrack pointed out that the network has spent millions of research dollars to prove that people over age 55 are the fastest-growing segment of the population. He noted that this group controls much of the country's wealth, and are most the likely to switch brands.

"Still, we didn't make a dent in the agencies' perceptions," Poltrack complained. "It's wrong. It's insane. We get 10 million viewers for [a show like] *Christy* and thousands of letters imploring us to keep it on the air. None of that

tions," Kemper said. "That was soon after ACATS appointed a 'Grand Alliance' of mainly corporate entities to propose a universal standard for an advanced TV system. One common denominator is that all the members of the Grand Alliance have vested interests in either licensing technology or manufacturing and selling HDTV video equipment and TV sets. The views of filmmakers were neither represented nor solicited. The ASC's ad hoc committee includes both cinematographers and other imaging technology experts representing a broad base of knowledge in the film and TV industries. We have no financial interest in the outcome of the debate."

The ASC's proposals were published in an editorial in *American Cinematographer* magazine in December

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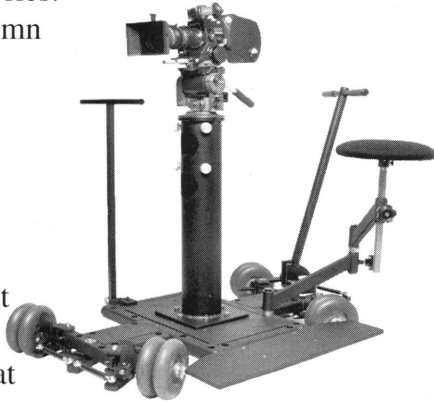


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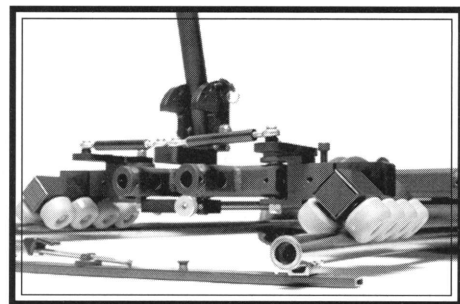
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moves potential sponsors."

One of the panelists was Richard Welsh, creative director of the Hallmark Hall of Fame and executive producer of Hallmark Entertainment. He noted that Hallmark has sponsored quality TV movies for 45 years. Welsh said, "There's no excuse for other sponsors not targeting high-quality programming or more diverse audiences. . . we want a diverse audience. We want to sell greeting cards to everyone."

Welsh also pointed out that Hallmark's commitment to quality programming has rubbed off favorably on the company.

The Caucus featured three panels led by award-winning hyphenates: Roger Gimbel, Jerry Isenberg and Bonny Dore. Other Caucus members on panels included Norman Corwin, Marlo Thomas, Leonard Stern, Marion Rees and Sam Denoff, along with Ted Harbert, president of ABC Entertainment, and Bob Beran, president of Bell Atlantic's Video Services Division. Also present were Judge Lisa Richette, who mused on the real-world impact of TV violence; public interest spokespersons James P. Steyer, founder and chairman of Children Now, and Tracy Westen, president of the Democracy network; journalists Matt Roush of *USA Today* and Joshua Quittner of *Time* magazine; and various new-media advocates who focused on future TV delivery systems.

ber 1993. ASC vice president Steven Poster also presented the ASC's viewpoint at an April 1994 symposium sponsored by the Artists Rights Foundation. The recommendations were forwarded to members of ACATS and the FCC.

"The 1.78:1 aspect ratio for HDTV was originally proposed in 1984 by a sub-committee of the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers [SMPTE]," Kemper said. "It was a compromise between the 1.66:1 aspect ratio suggested by NHK, a Japanese TV network with strong ties to the consumer electronics industry in Japan, and the 1.85:1 aspect ratio most often used for feature film production at that time. That was purely an engineering decision. No filmmakers supported that compromise."

Stringer, a former president of the CBS Broadcast Group, and now CEO and chairman of TELE-TV, a new media company owned by a consortium of telecos, said he decided to leave the network when it was "sneered at" for targeting some of its prime-time programming to people outside of the 18 to 49 paradigm.

Stringer said that within 12 months, TELE-TV will offer a choice of 100 channels delivered over phone lines in various parts of the country. The latter will be interactive in that consumers will be able to choose what they want to see and when they want to see it.

Stringer believes this move to be a big step in the right direction. But Beran, whose parent company is one of the TELE-TV principals, admitted that because segmented audiences for video-on-demand will be small, there is little seed money allocated for creating new programs. Most of the entertainment and information content on the information superhighway, at least initially, will be re-runs of old movies and TV programs.

Steven Poster, vice president of the American Society of Cinematographers, was one of a number of cinematographers in the audience. "It's evident that the way we look at and access television programming will change so drastically that we won't recognize it 10 years from now," he said. "But content will still be king. The audience will still

Kemper noted that even in 1984, nearly 30 percent of the feature films produced in the United States were originated in 35mm anamorphic format, which has a much more cinematic 2.35:1 aspect ratio. An engineer who participated in the SMPTE decision justified the comparatively narrow aspect ratio by claiming that cinematographers only put "visual fluff" on the edges of the frame. He said that the important visual information is always in the middle of the frame.

"That statement was flat-out wrong," Kemper said. "The truth is that the choice of film format is an extremely important artistic decision for the director and cinematographer. The reality is that there is a significant trend toward the use of true wide-screen formats [Super 35 and anamor-

*continued on page 20*



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want to see compelling stories and the way that the images are captured on film will still be an essential ingredient."

Poster commended the Caucus for taking this initiative, and encouraged them to broaden the dialogue to include cinematographers. He also urged Caucus members to support the ASC's effort to get the FCC to consider the ASC proposals for designing a "truly wide-screen advanced television system for the United States which doesn't impede or violate our ability to be visual storytellers." (See sidebar.)

Poster notes that the 16:9 (width to height) screen aspect ratio currently being considered as part of an HDTV standard for the United States would impose artificial and unnecessary creative limits on visual storytelling. He points out that thousands of existing wide-screen films would either have to be panned and scanned or letterboxed on the future Advanced Television system if the screen size is limited to a 16:9 aspect ratio. Poster observes that panning and scanning is simply a doublespeak way of saying that the images composed by the cinematographer will be altered by a technician.

"That's about as devastating to the content of the story as allowing a technician to arbitrarily alter the way the film was cut," he says. "This would affect the way that thousands of wide-format movies already in film libraries are

seen on television in the future. Perhaps more importantly, the artistic limitations of a 16 by 9 aspect ratio could have a chilling creative impact on the way films are produced in the future. On the other hand, if the Advanced Television system endorsed by the FCC provides an opportunity for composing true wide-screen images, it will put another weapon in the creative arsenal of TV producers, writers and directors. We are urging our colleagues in The Caucus to join us in taking a stand on this issue."

The ASC has proposed a 2:1 aspect ratio for HDTV, with a proviso that all films be shown in their native aspect ratio. Since program content is likely to be transmitted digitally, Poster points out, this could easily be accomplished. The ASC proposal also calls for progressive rather than interlaced line scanning. Poster notes that this will noticeably reduce image artifacts, and more importantly, will make it possible to show films at their actual frame rates, including slow-motion and high-speed sequences.

Poster adds that the ASC HDTV proposal parallels the needs of companies in the computer industry who want to merge functions of the home computer and television set. "We just aren't talking about an issue which offends the sensibilities of cinematographers," he says. "This issue is germane to the future of television in our society."

phic] today for producing theatrical features. In part, this trend is being driven by advances in film and lens technologies, which have made wide-screen production more practical. Movie audiences have also developed a taste for a more cinematic experience.

"All of those films are being added to a library consisting of thousands of important features which would have to be panned and scanned (recomposed) for display on the comparatively narrow TV screens advocated by members of the Grand Alliance," he said. "That is the aesthetic equivalent of buying a work of art and defacing it because the frame is narrower than the painting. Unfortunately, it seems that ACATS is poised to make this recommendation to the FCC."

Kemper said there is considerable support and enthusiasm for the ASC proposals in the creative community. He pointed out that many current dramatic TV programs are produced in wide-screen Super 35 format, which is compatible with the ASC's proposal. He said that the ASC's proposal would enhance the future value of these programs.

"Narrative filmmaking is an important part of our culture, and it is also our second-largest export," Kemper said. "We shouldn't limit our long-term horizons because of the short-term economic interests of the consumer electronics industry. It is important for us to leverage the best technology available today and design a truly advanced digital TV system for the United States."



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Ron Garcia has worked as cinematographer on numerous television projects and feature films—including *Disorganized Crime*, *Storyville*, and *Twin Peaks: Firewalk With Me*.

Photo: Michael Bulbenko. Film: Fuji Professional Neopan 400

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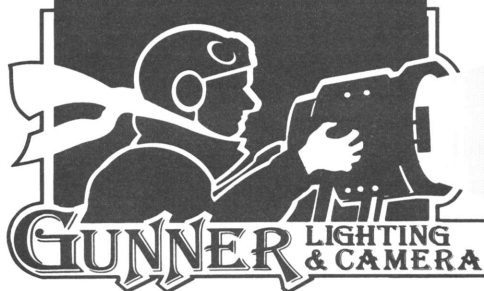
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**October 10-15:** Hammer Horror Weekend, American Cinematheque at the Directors Guild Theater, (213) 466-FILM.

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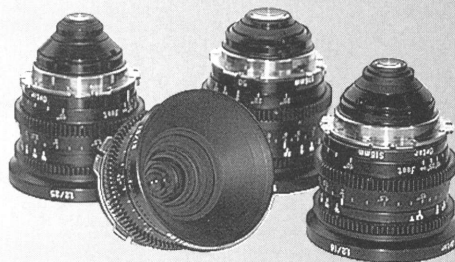
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Industrial Light & Magic has transformed the dance legends into a swingin' scissors and coquettish comb which come to life for a magical spin atop the counters of your local Supercuts hair salon. The exuberant spot, entitled "Stylin'," is the work of ace ILM commercial director Steve Beck. Beck's high-concept/low-verbiage approach is exemplified by his dreamlike 3M "Imagination" and intense Ford "Launch" commercials. But while those spots relied heavily on editorial and miniatures, "Stylin'" put the director through his paces in the new realm of computer-generated characters, set to a Forties jazz beat.

Beck and ILM were approached by the J. Walter Thompson Agency, who sold Supercuts on the spot's concept by showing the company's reps a pastiche of Fred Astaire-Ginger Rogers clips cut to the song which ultimately provided the musical ambiance. "They sold the concept on the song," Beck marvels.

That was the only easy part. From then on, it was up to Beck and his ILM team to breathe life into their "little visual parlor trick of illusion magic," as the director calls it. "We had to keep one hand waving while the other hand lifted something off the table."

The first order of business was studying Astaire and Rogers' work via videotape. "It was a pleasure looking through their old films," Beck states. "The spot was based on quite a bit of Fred Astaire's work, because we didn't find one routine in particular that we could just 'lift' and paste into the choreography. We tried to analyze how he'd move: his grace was always present and we could always get a sense of his dramatic pausing, the way he'd land and strike a certain pose. He knew how to capture the moment from beat to beat. The ghost of Fred

Astaire was with us the whole time."

But it was Astaire's solo work, especially his magical dance with a coat rack in 1951's *Royal Wedding*, that provided the most useful model of all. "His ability to transform a coat rack into a dancing partner helped us see how we could bring out the subtleties in a scissors and a comb," Beck says. "He made it look so easy, but I understand that he would spend days

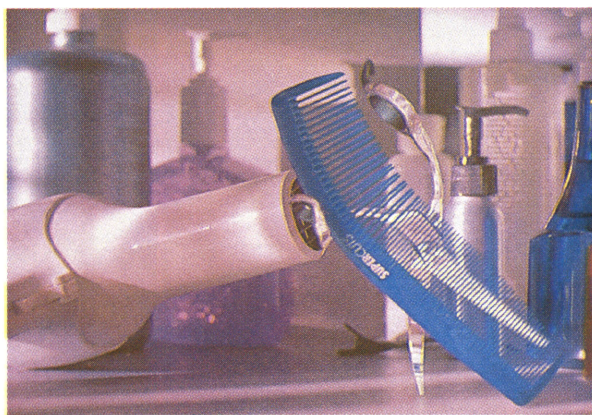
hockey stick in the upstairs' window of the CG department and wonder what the hell was going on up there! But I think through it all, we were able to translate this strange, awkward social event into this wonderful choreography."

After completing the choreography, Beck finished his storyboards and the spot was ready to roll. The director had an exact replica of a Supercuts salon built on ILM's main stage so his

## Cutting Up the Rug

ILM adds commercials to its dance card with "Stylin'," a computer-generated homage to Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers.

by Ron Magid



Photos courtesy of Industrial Light & Magic

crew could film unimpeded from every angle, including directly overhead for those Busby Berkeley-style shots. "We never could have done that at a Supercuts store," Beck insists. "The CG object technocrats rigged an additional camera in the grid over the stage to capture a top view of where the lighting elements were in each shot, which helped them cast accurate shadows when they added the scissors and comb."

Working with his longtime collaborator, cinematographer Andy Dintenfass, Beck and company sailed through the basic plate photography in a grueling one-day shoot. "One long day!" Beck gasps. "We did eleven setups. We were really hauling through it. There was a bit of collaboration that had to happen, so the animators and everybody pitched in. The CG guys did quite a bit of measuring of distance to camera as Andy and I discussed various angles while we moved a standard pair of scissors around the countertop. Andy's an extraordinary talent. He can hone in on the image really quickly and get it blocked in and looked at, which helped us push things along quite a bit."

and days practicing until he got those subtleties."

Beck can relate. Translating Astaire's distinctive style to a CG scissors and comb was even harder than imitating the master on the dance floor. Once Beck assembled his ILM effects team, they tried. And tried. "When we're doing a commercial, we can only storyboard so much," he explains. "So we had a bunch of guys trying to come up with a dance routine, and none of them really wanted to get up and dance with the others. We finally brought in a six-foot hockey stick they could dance around the room. People would see these guys dancing with this



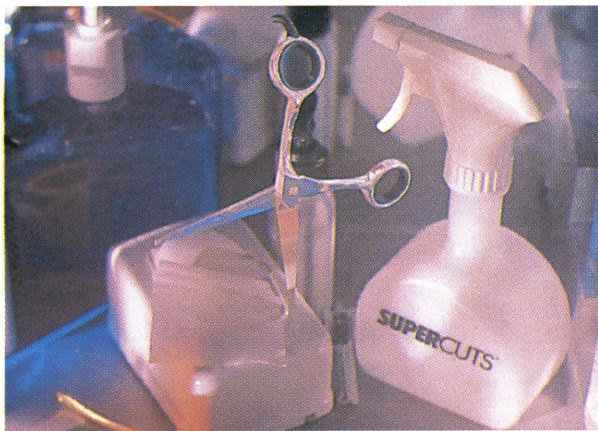
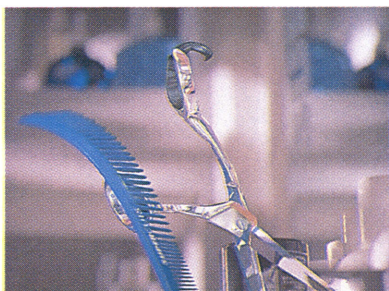
That speed was even more staggering when one realizes Beck was directing characters that *weren't there*, as Dintenfass panned his camera to follow. "I'd love to say it was scientific, but we just kept trying," Beck admits. "We shot those moves a couple of different ways, and in some places we may have compressed the plates to accommodate the animation. Because we had an empty stage to a certain degree, the animators could move their objects either up- or downstage to camera depending on what looked best. Our attitude was, 'Hey, if the scissors or the comb exit frame, let them.' In his dance routines, Fred didn't always stay center-frame. There were some blueprints we had to follow in order to cut from shot A to shot B. This type of filmmaking can appear very rigid on certain levels, but it's actually very fluid: between points A and B, nothing exists, so we can do whatever we want!"

Filling that void was the task of CG Supervisor George Murphy, who found time between his Academy Award-winning efforts on *Forrest Gump* and his work on the upcoming

*Mission: Impossible* to oversee the modeling and animation of the "Stylin'" protagonists. "My role was to pull together the CG crew to help them solve all the creative problems," Murphy says. "Andy and Steve did a beautiful job of lighting and shooting the live-action elements, and then we came in to try to make this whole storyline take place. A spot like "Stylin'" would have typically been thought of as a Pixar/Rhythm & Hues-type commercial. It's not the sort of work people associate with ILM, so it was nice to see us moving into the realm of 3-D character animation."

Nice, but hardly a surprise after ILM's astounding work on *Casper* (which will be detailed in the upcoming December issue of

AC). Still, attempting such a high level of animation on a commercial schedule was demanding. "We had six weeks from start to end," Murphy explains. "We only had one technical director on the spot, Steve Bragg, so I was pretty hands-on, even compositing a couple of shots. The whole crew was really great, but they were fairly new to some of the tools they were using, so they had to learn quickly. On a feature, we have a few extra months for R&D, whereas



on this commercial, we were solving modeling problems on our main characters within the same week we were starting our animation!"

So what kind of modeling problems can befall a scissors and comb? "Well, which is the female and which is the male?" Beck asks. "We talked a lot about the characteristics of the comb and scissors, how they should be flexible in order to establish character, how they needed lots of charm, personality, pizzazz and *savoir faire*. We never wanted to lose sight of the fact that this was about a guy chasing a girl around a bush, because the whole idea we were trying to achieve was this little romance. In the end, we decided the scissors would woo the comb."

Both scissors and comb were complex computer graphics models. "Because of all the teeth and all the intersections, this comb was pushing a geometric complexity similar to that of the T-rex in *Jurassic Park*!" Murphy insists. "For the scissors, we had to figure out which of its eyelets was the head. We decided the one with the little tang, which we saw as a combination eyebrow/hair, was the 'emoter,' since it gave us some indication of what its feelings were. Since our models were supposed to be representative of the actual scissors and combs approved for Supercuts franchises, we had to follow fairly strict guidelines. They did allow a little modification to the scissors design: we actually talked the client out of putting this little jog between the thumbhole and the pivot joint because it looked like a broken shoulder."

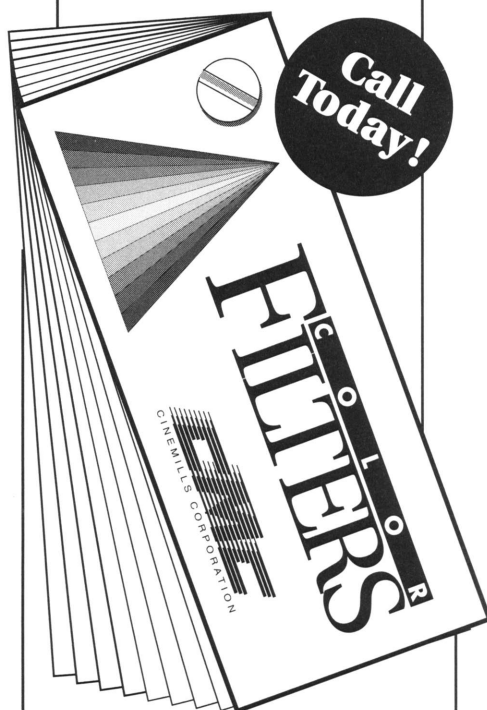
Next, Beck, Murphy and animators Tim Harrington and Carl White struggled to find ways of endowing these inanimate objects not only with life, but with personality — a task the Supercuts guidelines didn't make any easier. "They were very particular about the size relationship between the scissors and the comb," Murphy recalls. "Of course, that relationship changed once we decided to allow the scissors to bend its 'legs,' so we had to take liberties with scale to compensate for their performance. Also, when the scissors' legs bent, we didn't want them to look too rubbery, so we gave them this tensile resistance, as if they wanted to snap right back to their straight position. We saw the comb, which didn't have legs, as a woman in a long dress, so it just glided along. The genius of some of the work Tim Harrington and Carl White did was in adjusting the way the comb landed to make it feel as if it took a bit of a step."

Making the sequence flow involved more than just deciding on the kinds of dance steps the scissors and comb would take, although those choices were integral to the spot's success. "We had to look at what kind of relationship was developing between the characters, and what kinds of choreography would reinforce that,"

*Rendered in CG, the dancing scissors and comb were choreographed by way of Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, Gene Kelly and ILM team members' rug-cutting experiments with a hockey stick. Avoiding "rubbery" movement characteristics, designers incorporated material-specific qualities into the romantic duo: the scissors were given tensile resistance and the comb a plastic flexibility.*



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Murphy recalls. "We tried some steps which seemed like a good idea on paper, but then Tim and Carl would draw animated thumbnail storyboards and we'd see that sometimes the cut would be too short to carry an idea through, or that a particular step slowed down the pacing when we wanted it to pick up. We had to balance those choices against what the emotions would logically be."

In pacing the spot, Beck found there was only one place to trim from as the CG shots came together: the establishing shot of the Supercuts salon. Amazingly, the client and agency allowed that product shot to get shorter and shorter rather than interfere with the on-screen romance. Thus, the spot opens with the shortest establishing shot ever seen, giving viewers barely enough time to register a barberchair and a counter in the Supercuts salon. Somehow it reads. "I was worried about that part," Beck grins. "Where the hell are we? But it's enough. I begged the client, 'Leave it be and you'll get a lot more mileage out of this spot.' Luckily and gratefully, everyone wanted to see the dance number; even the client said, 'We've seen the stores a thousand times, let's watch the dancing scissors and comb!'"

Following the one and only establishing shot, the action picks up and never stops. The next shot shows the scissors lying on the counter, magically springing to life, leaping acrobatically past bottles onto a tissue box, then dropping onto the comb, flipping it into play. "That opening shot involved the most difficult match-move," Murphy says. "None of the plates were shot motion-control. We had to match-move our 3-D computer camera to simulate the complex move as the camera followed the scissors around."

Getting the scissors on its feet was about more aesthetic issues, like maintaining tensile resistance as its legs bent. The scissors perform a little balancing act after jumping on the tissue box, a move which is a straight lift from Gene Kelly's famed *Singin' in the Rain* routine. The shot was the work of Tim Harrington, one of the first of the new wave of animators at ILM. A young artist fresh out of school

who was actually trained in computer animation, Harrington says, "This is my big break. My favorite shot was the opening, the scissors' little solo dance across the counter. I liked that sort of backwards handstand way it lifted off the counter. That was the make or break moment; we had to set the tone with that scene, and it worked pretty well."

The scissors makes some surprisingly suave moves, especially considering it's not the kind of shape that lends itself to easy anthropomorphizing; after all, if one eyelet's the head, then it only has one arm. "That was pretty difficult," Harrington acknowledges. "I animated a lot of arcs and fluid overlapping type of motions so its actions just seemed to flow. It's an animation principle that makes things look more organic: as the whole body moves, the head moves with it, following through. It's similar to puppeteering; it's my interpretation of Fred Astaire as a pair of scissors. A lot of it's intuitive, and a lot of it I picked up from watching him move. I just tried to make it look cool."

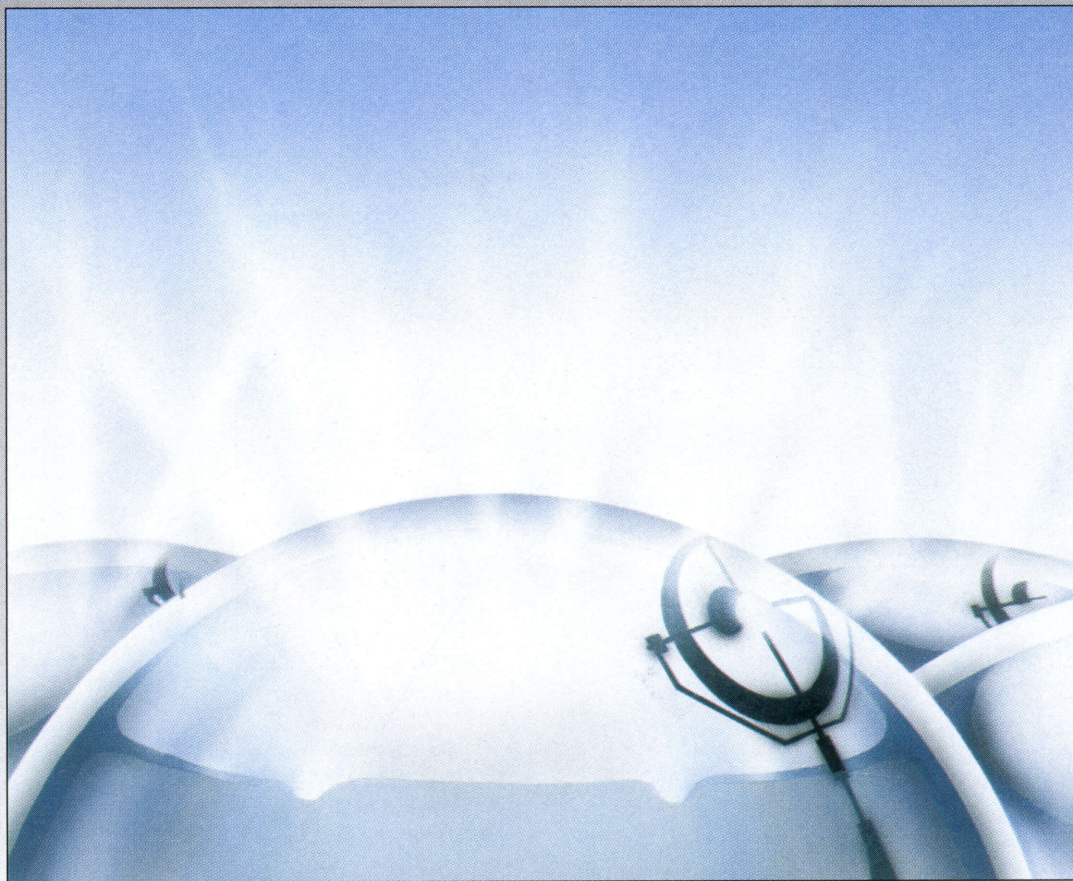
After the scissors land on the tip of the comb, the comb flips, rising into the air in an overhead Busby Berkeley shot. The comb's intro proved to be one of the most difficult shots to achieve. "We were just introducing the comb here, trying to establish its female personality," Murphy recalls. "As the comb came up toward camera in this high-angle shot, the audio track gave a little giggle, so we tried some things like parting the teeth to simulate a smile, or jiggling the teeth as if it were laughing, to tie in with the audio track. All our attempts to make the comb look like a mouth felt forced, so we decided we'd do it all with body language. We created this overall reverberation that's more like happy stretching as the comb reaches the top."

As Harrington and Carl White animated through the dance routine, they performed a constant high-wire balancing act to prevent their CG characters from becoming freakish. "Whenever we went a little too far and it started looking cartoony," Harrington says, "we always tried to emphasize their performances, in time with the music. We had to make them act as



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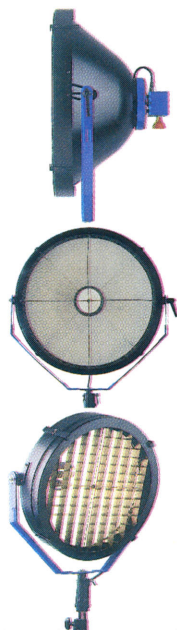
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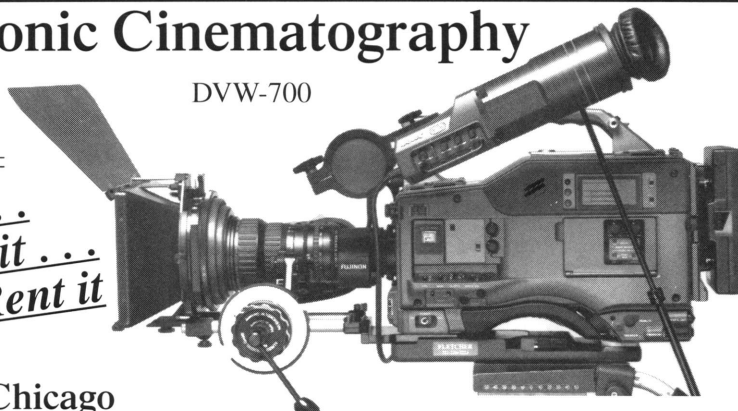
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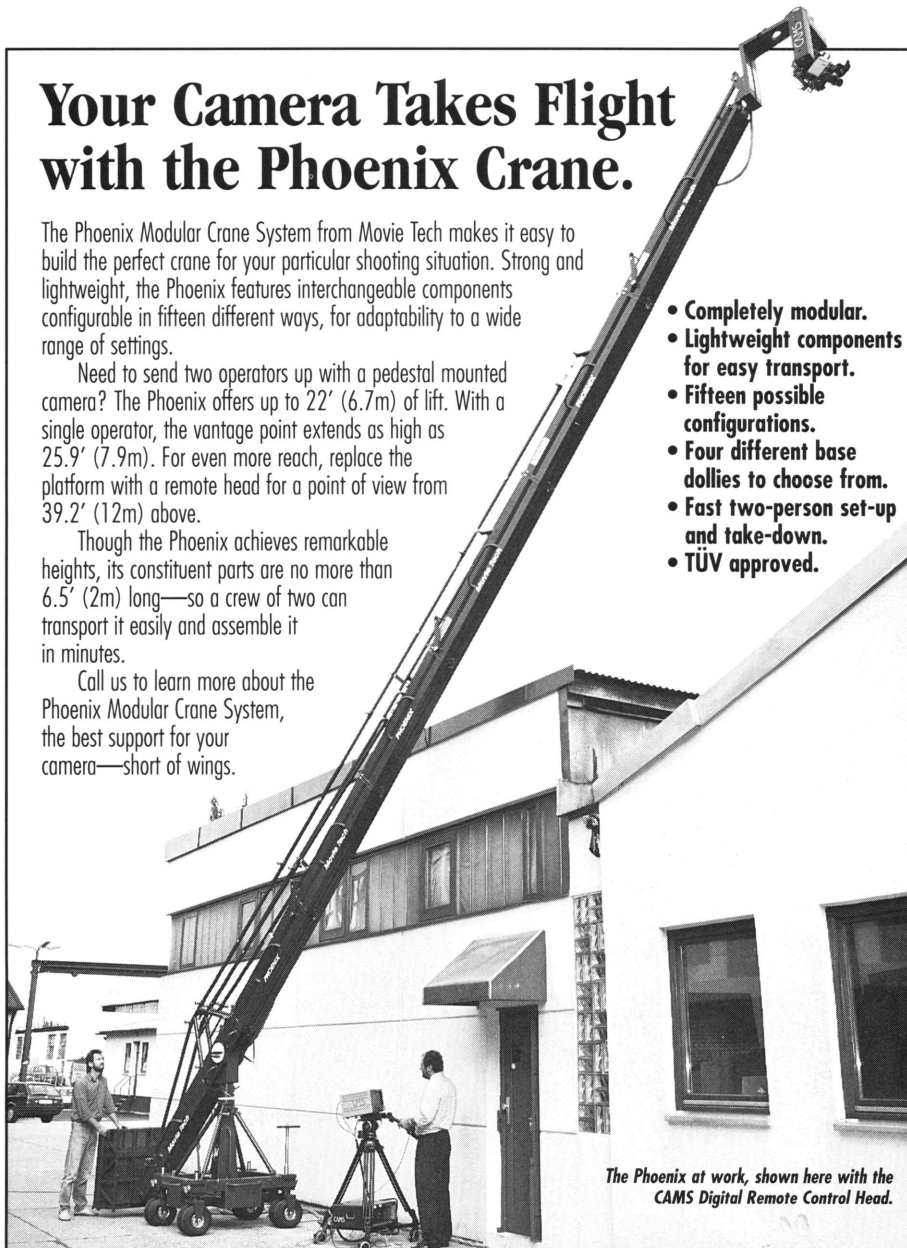
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if they were Fred and Ginger instead of making it zany."

Among the toughest shots was a close-up of the comb as it bends to turn on a hair dryer for added propulsion into her next dance step. "That particular shot had some difficult technical issues on the surface," Murphy remembers. "When we skinned the comb as she bent, we wanted to get these really long straight-line reflections off her surface. When we tried using the traditional socking procedures over the comb's straight geometry, the image itself looked fine but the reflections had all these straight lines which ruined the video resolution; the comb started to get this faceted sense. We had to resort to some different types of trickery, so we created a new model, a lattice, to do the bend."

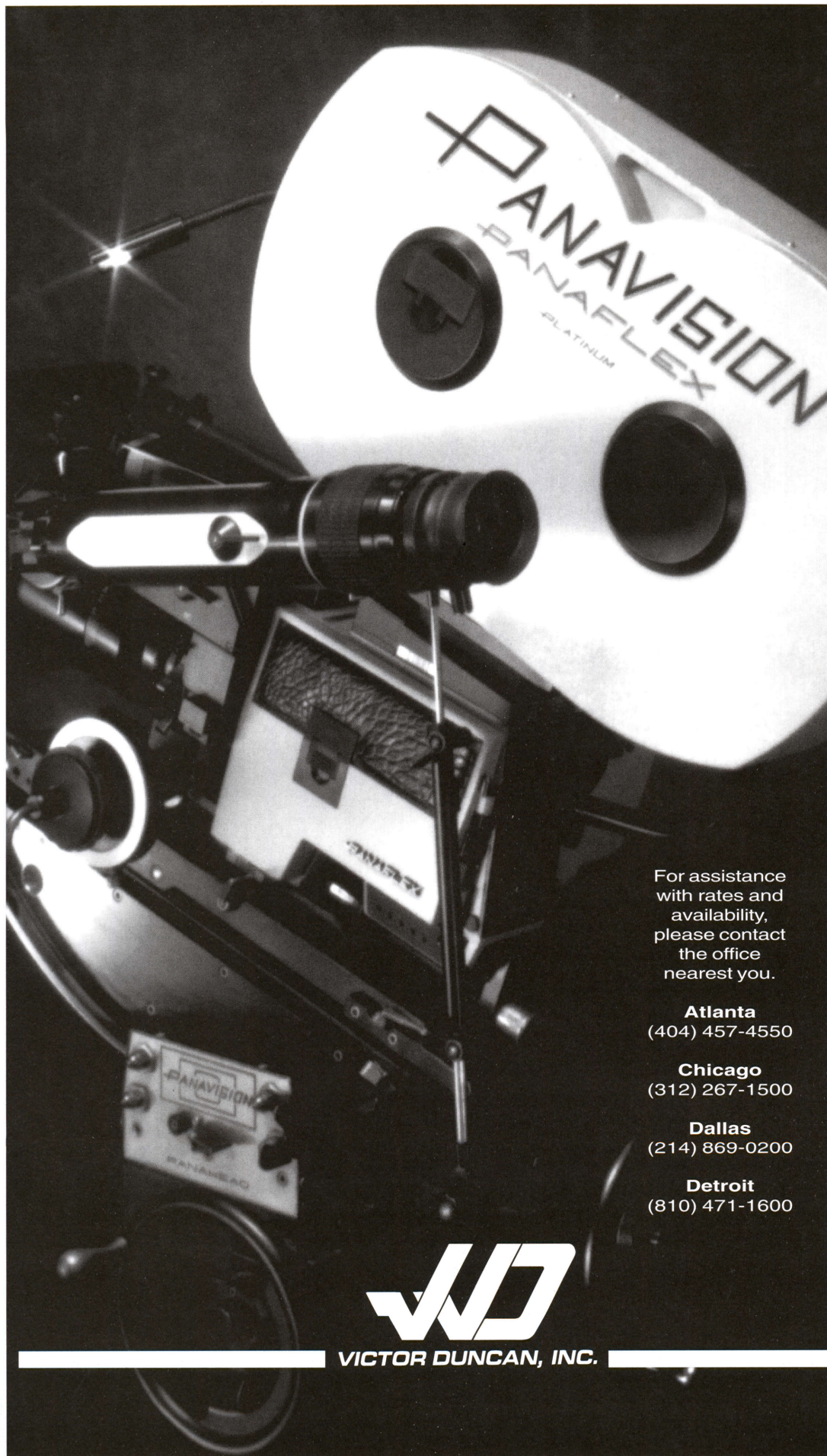
The style and wit of "Stylin'" is exemplified in the next cut. The hair dryer blows the comb toward camera, which pulls back: what starts out as a POV quickly becomes an over-the-scissors shot. The scissors thinks he's got her lined up for a kiss, but the comb slips right out of frame; the scissors does a double-take which perfectly captures Astaire's grace, charm and sense of humor. "Tim Harrington worked that out," Murphy says. "That's a testament to his strong feel for these personalities and his ability to bring that out. How do you make an inanimate object without eyes, mouth or nose express these emotions?"

As it turned out, that particular shot didn't go too well at first. "We were going in a totally different direction and the client was wondering what to do," Harrington says, "so I just spent one night on it and pretty much threw that together. The next day they saw it and really dug it."

"Stylin'" is the culmination of a much larger print, radio and television ad campaign, all of which used the final shot of the scissors and comb posed by the Supercuts logo for continuity.

But for ILM, the spot represents a new push into the advertising arena. Eighteen months ago, Kevin Townsend took over the reigns of the commercial division, implementing a four-year plan to bring recognition to ILM's flagship





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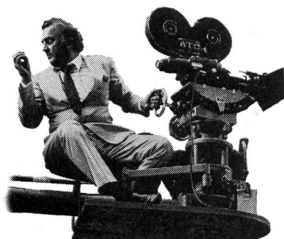
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directors and to increase producers' awareness of what ILM had to offer beyond the obvious. Virtually all of Townsend's goals have been realized. "This spot for Supercuts is a good example of the direction the commercial division's going in," Townsend says. "We're expanding the toolbox, going beyond just serving a particular scene by creating whole environments and characters. In the past, advertising reacted to feature work, and the commercial division employed techniques we developed for features; as our digital palette expands, many techniques will now be pioneered in the commercial division. That will ultimately result in better, more efficient film production, so the pollenization will be bipolar."

The first step towards fulfilling that goal is the creation of the new Commercial Computer Graphics Projects division. "I envision the CG division becoming almost like another director," Townsend says. "It's an opportunity for us to groom people who are more attuned to working in the commercial environment."

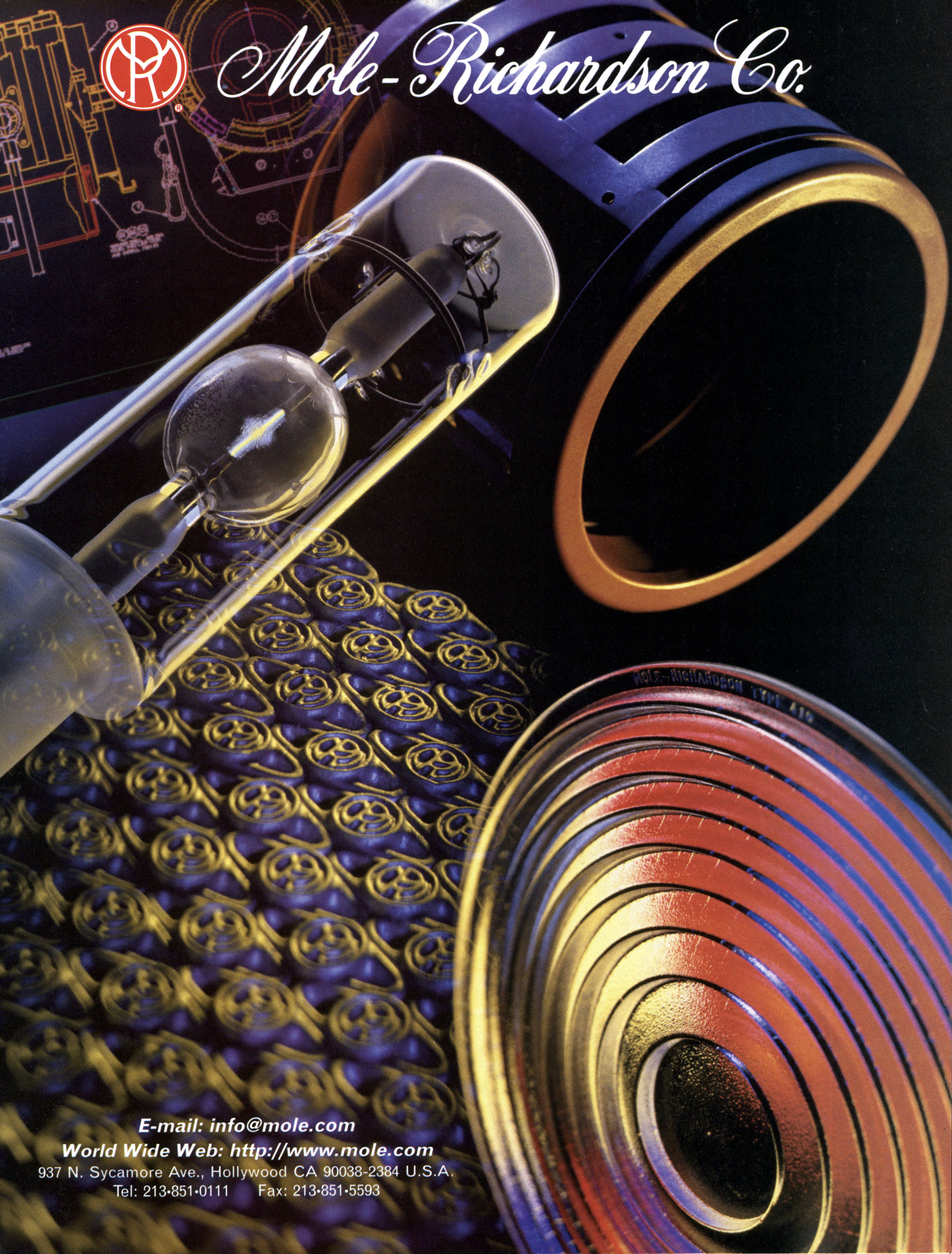
Headed by British effects artist Paul Nightingale, the new division will push character animation in the commercial environment, typified by "Stylin'" and an upcoming GTE commercial featuring a talking telephone. "When we did 'Stylin'," some of the people, like Tim Harrington, were dedicated commercial people, while others, like George Murphy, were making guest appearances," Nightingale says. "Ultimately, we'll be operating with between 20 and 30 people, but we want to encourage more guest appearances by those artists who want a change of pace from features. My plan is to exploit the relationship between the two groups to the greatest degree possible."

"We can now pick people from both sides to create a perfect team for a perfect spot," Townsend agrees. "Putting an Academy Award-winner like George Murphy into the high-energy world of commercials, after working on a single feature like *Forrest Gump* for 12 months, energizes the artist and lets him see a whole new way of doing things."





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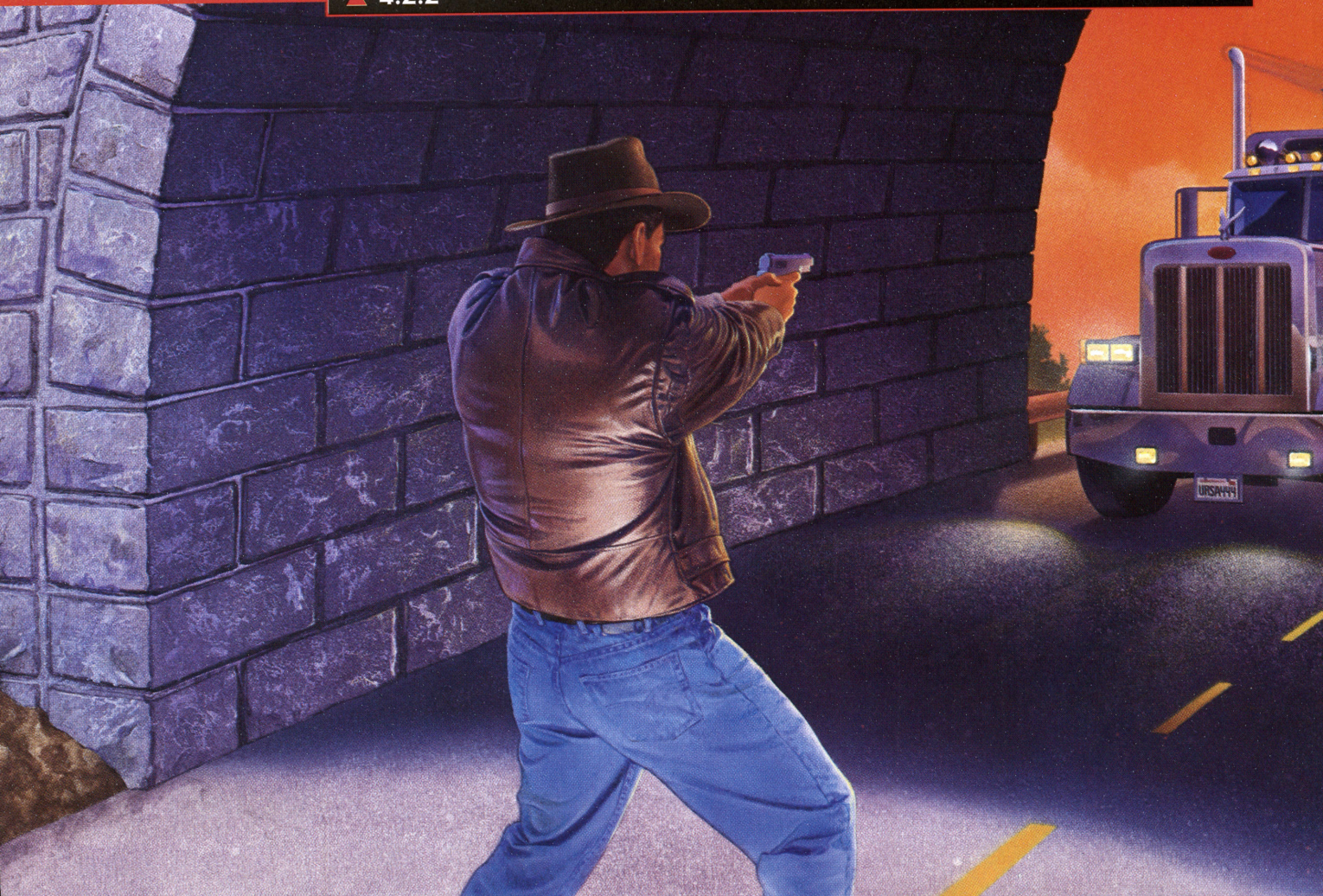
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RECALLING HOW DAVID FINCHER first described his approach to *Seven*, cinematographer Darius Khondji, AFC, excitedly echoes the director's whispered words: "It's got to be *frightening*."

But the nature of the "frightening" film has transformed dramatically over the last quarter century, with plays on shadows and suggestion such as *The Haunting* contorting into the all-too-real ghastliness of *The Silence of the Lambs* — with *The Exorcist* perhaps designating a transition point. What was once goosebump-prompting has been overwhelmed by lurid real-life headlines pro-

claiming far more terrible tales than even Hollywood is offering these days. Ironically, while the construction and devices of the fright film have changed, the horrors played out are still motivated by the worldly ills fabled by the Greeks to have been released by the curious Pandora. And in the case of screenwriter Andrew Kevin Walker's *Seven*, a hybrid detective-thriller, those universal turpitudes are given grisly new characterizations.

The film trails Lt. William Somerset (Morgan Freeman), who is anticipating retirement after breaking in his ambitious yet inex-

perienced replacement, Detective David Mills (Brad Pitt). But the case unfolding before the duo draws them deeper and deeper into the bent mind of a serial killer seeking revenge for society's ills. His crimes, based on the Seven Deadly Sins, interpret Sloth, Gluttony, Pride, Greed, Envy, Wrath and Lust as perversely thematic statements — the victims serving as metaphoric centerpieces in scenes resembling bizarre art installations.

While gruesome, the material struck a chord with Khondji, who initially became interested in film as a young teen in Paris. "I've



# The Sins of a Serial Killer

Director David Fincher and cinematographer Darius Khondji, AFC bring the Seven Deadly Sins to the screen in the scary, stylized *Seven*.

by David E. Williams

But Khondji was ultimately more fascinated by the moving image than by mere chills, and soon found that he didn't enjoy only horror pictures any more, but all films. Meanwhile, by the time he was 16, he began making shorts on Super 8, even though he still wasn't really aware of cinematography as an occupation and "thought the director was the one holding the camera."

Pursuing his interest, Khondji traveled to study at New York University, where he immersed himself in cinema. He recalls, "Important films for me at the time were *The Conformist*, Murnau's *Sunrise*, and of course *Citizen Kane*. *Kane* marked the first time I looked for the name of the cinematographer in the credits of a film, and I discovered Gregg

Toland. I started watching a lot of Griffith's films at the time too, and kept seeing the name Billy Bitzer. I found that other directors often worked with the same cinematographers too: Bernardo Bertolucci and Vittorio Storaro, Ingmar Bergman and Sven Nykvist. I became interested in the connection between them and began watching based as much on the cinematographer's as the director's name."

In the NYU production program, Khondji continued to make Super 8 and 16mm shorts. "My scripts were always concerned with image and ambiance rather than with story," he says. "I became increasingly fascinated with imagery and experimented with photography; everything led me toward working with light. But I couldn't admit to myself that I

Left: Detectives William Somerset (Morgan Freeman) and David Mills (Brad Pitt) enter the scene of the Sloth murder. Khondji (below, with Fincher) captured the film's gritty interiors on 7293. Looking for a "moist, fungal" look, he used cool green filters on daylight-balanced lights.

wanted to do a film like *Seven* for a long time; I grew up dreaming about it," he begins. "I was originally introduced to cinematography by going to horror films. The first time, my mother took my sister and me to see *King Kong*, but just as the titles were coming up, the police came and forced us to leave because I wasn't 13 yet — the film was forbidden for children. So when I turned 13 I went to see all of the horror films I could: Roger Corman films, the Hammer Studio films — all of them. Films like *Dracula* with Christopher Lee were very important to me when I was a kid."





**Right: Khondji followed a source-lighting strategy throughout *Seven*. The flashlights used in several scenes were normal, yet the wattage was slightly boosted to cut through the lightly-smoked sets. Below: The detectives hunt for clues to the Sin-based serial killings. By pushing his stock by a stop, using a re-silvering process and occasionally flashing, Khondji dramatically deepened the blacks and saturated the remaining colors.**

was much more interested in cinematography than writing or directing. Shooting other people's films at NYU was my first experience strictly as a cameraman, and it helped me find myself because the short films I was directing were all the same — focusing more on imagery. So it was a very freeing experience to work for and with someone else — translating what they wanted and giving it to them."

After school, Khondji returned to France and soon became an assistant to Bruno Nuytten (*Brubaker*), whom he describes as "a fantastic cinematographer." (Nuytten later went on to direct the stunning *Camille Claudel*.) The experience cemented Khondji's interest in pursuing cinematography in ways he hadn't yet considered. He remarks, "I studied how to shoot and light at NYU, and I had a very tough cinematography teacher, but the most useful thing about school was meeting people. I don't think the most important thing you can learn is *where* to put the camera or the lights, but *how* to interact with the director, approach a script and so on — which is what being close to Bruno taught me."

After returning to Paris, Khondji shot a few shorts and showed one to some close friends

and Nuytten. "He told me I should stop wasting my time as an assistant. And from that time on I concentrated only on shooting things myself."

"Even from the beginning I shot a lot of commercials, which I enjoyed because they allowed a lot of crazy experimentation — they became a second school for me. I shot 16mm, blew Super 8 up to 35mm, cross-processed reversal stocks — I did lots of tests. At the time we even went to the printing stage — although now we usually just go to D1 — so it was an opportunity to learn that process as well.

But it was also a chance to become more selective as people began offering more work to me. The product could be anything, but the opportunities to have complete creative freedom were the ones you wanted, because they allowed more experimentation." This adventurous attitude became the cinematographer's calling card in the commercial realm — a card he later played for such fashionable clients as Yves St. Laurent, Calvin Klein, Armani and Lancome and for directors such as Jean Baptiste Mondino, Chico Bialas, Peter Lindberg and William Klein.



Khondji concurrently began his work in features with rock star/filmmaker F.J. Ossang's *Treasure of Bitch Island*, a black-and-white, anamorphic, underground feature that became a major cult film in France. The film's visual panache was even recognized by the esteemed film journal *Cahiers du Cinema*. And as he had previously shot a lot of black-and-white for both commercials and shorts, Khondji considers himself very lucky that his first feature was monochromatic. "Our generation grew up with color films, so for my early work in black-and-white I had to think of it as a *new* thing. But black-and-white had become the basis for my learning lighting, allowing me to discover artificial lights in a graphic sense after primarily working with natural light. So this was a great opportunity to expand on what I had done."

Khondji's other feature



credits include *Delicatessen*, a social satire about consumption and cannibalism which earned international notice, a Cesar nomination for Best Cinematography and the Gran Prix award at the Chalon Cinematographer's International Film Festival; significant portions of *Before the Rain*, winner of the Golden Lion at the 1994 Venice Film Festival; *L'Ombre Du Doute*, a 1993 Venice Film Festival selection; *Models*; *Marie Louise*; and *The City of Lost Children*, a dream-like, science-fiction themed film from the creators of *Delicatessen* which opened this past year's Cannes Film Festival.

Indicative of Khondji's work is a proclivity for interpretive contrast — inherent to his visualization of any story. In an extreme example, *Bitch Island* was even printed on high-con Kodak soundtrack stock.

"On the very technical side of any film, the most important thing to me is to control a stock's contrast, or gamma curve," Khondji explains. "I usually shoot on Kodak, and when you ask for 48 or 47, you get a certain latitude, a certain curve. So I like to change that curve according to the tone of the story, or even to play with it from scene to scene." To that end, he began using a non-bleaching process in his color work, leading to further experimentation with a silver process that called for his stock to be run first through color baths and then re-souped as black-and-white, restoring silver to the negative and resulting in rich blacks while simultaneously desaturating colors. *Delicatessen* was his first feature to benefit from this procedure. "The directors wanted very contrasty images — something that would put color into the world of *realism poetique*, a current of the French cinema of the 1930s and 40s which was very expressionistic," Khondji remembers. "So I had to increase the contrast beyond what I could get from lighting." As the blacks were so deepened by the silver process, Khondji would first use the Arriflex VariCon system to add detail in the shadows, while at the same time pushing the negative a stop to saturate the remaining colors as much as possible. "We put more color



back in at every step we could, while at the same time getting these strong blacks — like ink," he says.

"Also, for the first time I used Chinese lanterns on a feature," he adds. "When I was a child I had a huge paper lantern in my bedroom, which I loved. So I asked the gaffer on *Delicatessen* to find us some, which we used on dimmers. I thought I had invented something until someone said to me, 'Interesting that you use the same technique as Phillipe Rousselot!' I knew I hadn't invented anything else, but I thought for sure the lanterns were mine!"

A similar contrast-manipulating processing technique was later executed in conjunction with digital imaging on *The City of Lost Children*, though at the internegative stage to ensure that resulting prints would be consistent worldwide. "*Delicatessen* made the way for *City of Lost Children*, and we then took that technique one step further for *Seven*," he says.

Khondji first worked with director David Fincher on a commercial for Nike. "We got along very well," Khondji says, "especially in the way we talked about movies. I had only seen his film *Alien*<sup>3</sup>, but immediately knew he was a great director." And after

unexpectedly receiving and then reading the script for *Seven*, Khondji knew he had to shoot the project — and in a particular way. "I call that first impression of a movie the Big Bang — the birth of the film," he explains emphatically. "Everything comes from it, even if it is just the story in a few lines — all the light, the atmosphere, the ambiance, everything about the way the film is going to look. This first impression helps me decide if I will use one color process or another, certain lenses, lighting with neon or Chinese lanterns or tungsten or HMIs — it gives me the image of the film."

"I later talk to the director, whose first words and descriptions are also very important to me. Some know exactly what they want and others are not so structured — that's not so important, though if they have ideas things will usually move faster. But it's their emotions about the story that are very important to me. And then come the actors and how you will work with them, because for me the camera and lighting are like other principal performers. You come as a cinematographer to the world of the director and you must then perform within it with the other actors. It's the trip you go on with the director. My relationship with the director is like being his

**Investigating the Greed killing, Somerset and Mills find a message written in an "invisible ink" method. UV tubes reveal the clue and light the high-contrast, low-key scene.**



**A proponent of soft-lighting technique, Khondji often used a combination of Kino Flo banks with Chinese lanterns to achieve a "color noir" aesthetic. Top: Fincher looks on from the background as Pitt is fitted with a Kino Flo top-light. Bottom: Khondji takes a reading as Freeman is set in position with Kino Flos above and below.**

closest friend. He is my brother, my family."

Possessed by the story for *Seven*, which spoke to his heart as a horror fan, Khondji found inspiration while walking the nighttime streets of Manhattan. "The moisture, the colors, the water, everything felt right for the movie — even though it was to be made in Los Angeles, and I didn't even know if I would be shooting it yet," he says. "The studio, the unions — they had to accept me and everything had to be arranged. But the pictures were coming to me." In reference to a Don Siegel science-fiction classic, he jokes, "It was growing inside me like a body snatcher — filling me and taking me over."

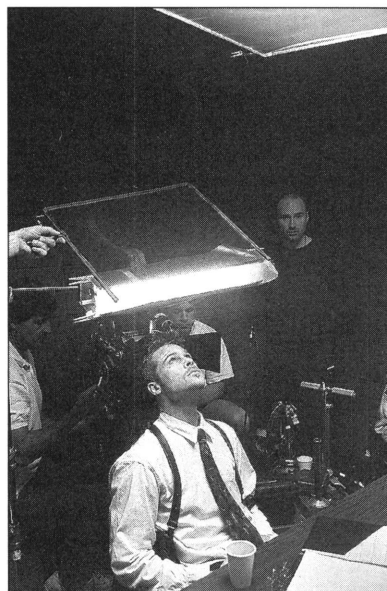
When he finally talked with Fincher about their approach to the film, Khondji realized the dilemma of working with a highly visually-minded director. "It's easy and very tough at the same time. He knows what he wants, but he also has the mind of a cinematographer; you have to bring him *more* than what he wanted. If you just do what he asks, it's not enough. So you have to bring up a mixture of what you have in your soul to what he wants. For me, David is like Ridley Scott when he did *Blade Runner* or *Alien* — there is a vision in him that is very strong. I had never experienced it before. Jean-Pierre Jeunet, the main director of *Delicatessen* [and *City of Lost Children*], was visual in a different way, but not like David in terms of his [all-encompassing] approach to camera, lighting and composition."

This style of collaboration forced Khondji to devise a new method for *Seven*, which, he states, "was to throw out everything old" — beginning with his traditional camera equipment.

Khondji had shot all of his previous films in Technovision, using a combination of Arriflex cameras and anamorphic Cooke lenses. But this time, he didn't have time to get the Arri outfit he wanted, so he instead opted for Panavision, a system he had never used before. "I was very well-received at Panavision in both Hollywood and Tarzana," Khondji notes. "They offered time to test all the equipment, and I looked at

their Primo lenses, which I found to be very sharp, very graphic and contrasty — very beautiful." In describing his enthusiasm for the primes, he makes special note of the Primo 24-275mm f2.8 zoom which was also used on the shoot.

Working closely with Fincher, Khondji felt that *Seven* "should be scary, but very mod-



ern," prompting the duo to seek out visual examples of the look they wanted. "One of the first books I brought with me was *The Americans* by Robert Frank," says Khondji. "It became a bible for me. It's all black-and-white, but the photos have the spirit of modernity. You feel the dynamic in

Frank's photography — which also helped me decide on the Primo lenses. The Panavision system is great, but I wanted the Primos, which I knew would give me that same feeling. So we shot the movie on Primo lenses in Super 35."

Describing the influences that led them to use the format, Khondji says, "We wanted to have this tough, handheld image mixed with some Steadicam — in the spirit of *The French Connection*, but also stylized and scary with spiritual lighting, like *Klute*. So those inspirations mixed with Robert Frank and led us to shoot in Super 35 instead of anamorphic because we wanted this incredibly free camera. We wanted to use the wide frame, so even in the tight inner-city locations we could have two close-ups at the same time, but we also wanted to be able to move the camera in any direction, at any time, without the heaviness of Cinemascope. We wanted the camera to float."

Manning Khondji's Panavision debut was his first American crew, which earned high marks. "I had a fabulous gaffer, Chris Strong, and an amazing young grip named Michael Coe, who worked on *Speed*. They were super-intelligent, and they were always behind me, supporting me. I also had a great camera operator with me, Conrad Hall, Jr., who is brilliant and moved the camera exactly as David and I wanted it — with perfect energy. I rediscovered Steadicam on this picture because I had a terrific young operator, David Emmerichs, whom I highly recommend. He used the Aaton 35, which gives wings to the Steadicam. It was incredible to have this very light camera with the Primo lenses; it was like combining two different worlds of cinematography."

To get the coverage the director wanted in limited time, Khondji often shot with two cameras. Either the Aaton or another Panavision Gold played the secondary role.

Having decided on his hardware and the aspect ratio, Khondji turned to film stocks. "Every movie to me is a cocktail, with the technical side blended according to the kind of image you want,"

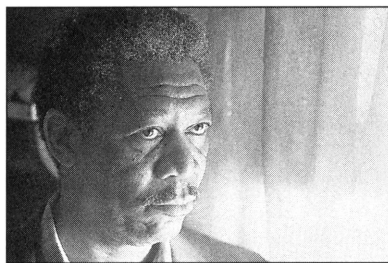


he offers. "Seven is set in an unknown city, all wet, gritty, crumbling and dirty, with the only warmth in places of security — a police station, a home. It could be Chicago or New York. I wanted to use the silver process and push the stock to get a feeling of grittiness, but we did a lot of tests at Deluxe to find a *new* look for this picture. We tried Kodak's 5293, 87, 98, 48 and 45 and ended up shooting the interiors — all the gritty stuff — on 93 rated normally. The beginning and ending exteriors of the film were shot on 45, slightly filtered with the 81 series."

For nighttime scenes, Khondji felt that 5287 would give him a special tool for depicting *Seven's* sense of darkness. He explains, "In Europe, a lot of people are scared of this stock; it is the Great Satan. They say 'Oh, 87! You use it?' But it was fantastic for this film. I never used it for 'normal' or interior scenes; I used it for night shoots and car interiors. With the silver process, pushing it a stop and sometimes using the Panaflasher, the blacks in the 87 became so rich, increasing the contrast between the worlds of light and dark."

Khondji's elaborate visual strategy was completed in postproduction by a color consultant from Paris, Yvan Lucas, at Deluxe. "He is a young genius, and he times all of my movies; he has the perfect feel for it," the cinematographer says.

Does *Seven* follow the "color noir" approach pioneered by John Alonzo, ASC, in *Chinatown* and later re-visualized in such films as *Blade Runner* and *Angel Heart*? "Well, those are three of the best-lit films of the last 15 years," Khondji demurs. "*Seven* is also a color noir, but it is very different from those films. It uses detective-film conventions in the lighting, as they did, but it is completely outside the conventions of our time. *Chinatown* was the rediscovery of noir and the best period film of its time, but it was still incredibly modern — very avant-garde. We have gone in another direction with this style on *Seven* — toward a roughness, a grittiness. We didn't worry about making things beautiful — Brad Pitt looks beautiful



[without any help.]"

Pausing, Khondji laughs, "Whatever you do with Brad, he looks great. He takes any angle or lighting like this perfect creature; for a cinematographer, he is an amazing actor to work with."

But while *Seven* has a distinctive overall noir texture, Khondji and Fincher carefully devised different looks for each of the crime scenes that detectives Somerset and Mills encounter. The looks of the various tableaux were determined not only by the thematic Sins, but by the victims' respective conditions upon discovery. "I saw these crimes as the work of an artist," the cinematographer says, "like the work of German artist Joseph Beuys, who was the father of modern conceptual art. This serial killer will create scenes of murder with different lighting, decorations, words written on the walls or floor in blood — very weird. You are led into a world of images by the killer, sug-

gested by the Seven Deadly Sins. That's important to understand as you see the different lighting atmospheres in the movie."

Gluttony is visualized in an early scene as Somerset and Mills find the body of an obese man seemingly force-fed to death, collapsed face-down in a plate of pasta. The dim, filthy room, bathed in a sickening yellow, is pierced by the detectives' flashlights as they search for evidence. "I love to see the origins of light within a shot, so source lighting is one of the main techniques we used," says Khondji. "I had the best experience I have ever had with a production designer on this film; the designer was Arthur Max. Most don't think about lighting at all, but for me, the trio of the director, cinematographer and production designer must collaborate fully. I expect the designer to talk to me about lighting, to offer ideas and rework his design if necessary. Arthur had a wonderful crew and his set decorator and prop man helped me a lot in finding lights to use as practicals."

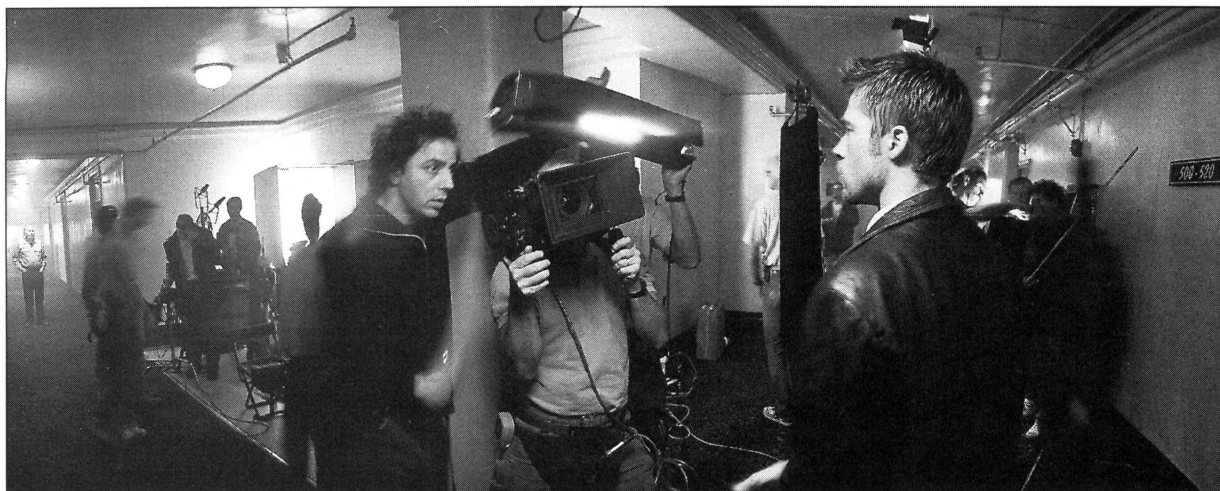
"The flashlights were normal, though a bit boosted in wattage after we shot tests. Xenon flashlights are too obvious to me; I wanted a more natural feel than that. We also used a bit of smoke to bring out the beams, but there is

*Seven is framed by several bright scenes to offset the darkness of the detectives' nightmare world, though "the rest is really creepy," Khondji remarks.*

*Above: Somerset and Mills study crime scene photos, lit by a large, heavily-cut soft-box and Kino Flo fill. Left: Somerset glows in warm light. Seven's modernistic style and primary color palette recalls the work of Italian shock auteurs Dario Argento and Mario Bava.*



*Khondji brings out Pitt's eyes for a handheld shot. "I always use a Kino Flo tube under or over the lens to add a highlight. Flagged off with some black tape, it doesn't light the face, but just leaves a line across the eyes," he explains.*



very little smoke elsewhere in the film.

"Then we would use Kino Flos as a backlight — a very soft line of light — and Chinese lanterns as top light, our key light. We used that combination often, with one and a half stops to two and a half stops difference between the key and fill.

"We shot the entire film almost wide open, so most interiors would be at f2.5 while the exteriors were 2.8. That made it extremely difficult for focus-pulling, but gave a precise plane to the action, so we could direct the viewer's eye.

"For me, the Gluttony scene was about darkness," Khondji specifies. "When the detectives come into the room, it's very old and shiny — greasy. There is not supposed to be light there. So when they aim their flashlights, the light shines back to them. Turn them off, and the room would be black. The room itself was underexposed, but we would overexpose the flashlight beams to really pick them up, though they were already two to three stops over the room. To have them fill the room a bit, I put bounce cards here and there in the corners and on the floor. I tried using reflector cards, but the look was too vulgar.

"Being under or over a few stops is not much normally, but when you are increasing the contrast so dramatically with a special color process, it is a lot — especially when pushing the stock a stop as well."

The Lust victim is found tied to a bed in a brothel, bathed in

rich red light, which amplifies the horror by filling the room with a crimson glow. In the center of the space, the naked bulb of a practical lamp acts as the only white light source. "That scene was shot almost in silhouette with the exception of some flashes from a photographer's strobe light," Khondji describes. "There is green light in part of the room, with the mixture becoming completely red at the other side, a very deep red. We decided on those colors because the scene takes place in a whorehouse and we wanted a kind of Hamburg, Germany look — a passionate, violent, almost monochromatic red, like blood. The color scheme reminded me of the Hammer Studios films I saw when I was a kid." Other horror fans might also be reminded of the primary-color nightmares of Italian directors Dario Argento and Mario Bava.

Sloth is exemplified in a particularly nasty scene in which a skeletal victim is found strapped to a bed, emaciated after long weeks of prone captivity. Khondji remembers, "This was a very necrotic, green scene, like being under the bottom of a river — with the feeling that time has passed. It had a moist, fungal look. I added a bit of green gel to all the lights, which were all daylight-balanced, just to give the feeling of angst. As in an Edvard Munch painting, you have this green spectrum, even if there is no green within it. But it was also a very eerie location, in downtown Los Angeles, which had been abandoned for years and filled with lead-based paint and very danger-

ous. It was perfect, with that feeling of rot.

"The practical lights in the scene were given a bit of red, but for me, a practical is usually orange with a 1/4 to full CTO or a very cool green. The contrast of color for me is just as important as the contrast of the light intensity. My normal fill light for ambiance is usually color-corrected to match the shadows, to keep the scene cooler."

As in all the scenes featuring victims, the Sloth sequence relied heavily on special make-up effects for an additional element of shock value. *Seven* was the first time Khondji had shot extensive prosthetics, leading him to trust the experts. "I got along extremely well with our special effects prosthetics artist, Rob Bottin. He was my friend on this movie and a great supporter. Rob would tell me how to light his effects and I would do it because he had a good feeling for what we were doing and such great experience with the materials he uses. When you work with great people, you *should* listen to them. They are artists and it should be a collaboration.

"Usually when I see creatures in the movies, they are overlit and it doesn't look right," Khondji adds. "A great creator like Rob, who produces amazing work, knows that it is much more important that the effect looks *real* than for it to be fully seen. That is the *only* thing. So for the man tied to the bed, we used a sort of contrasty, counter-lit approach I learned by watching the films of Jacques Tourneur: *Cat People*, *I Walked With A Zombie*, *Curse of the Demon*. Those





A T R A D I T I O N O F E X C E L L E N C E







**A shadowy figure escapes in silhouette. The windows were blown out with heavily-diffused 20K HMI's and Dino lights, sending shafts through the smoked location.**

films taught me that you don't have to show and light everything — that the impression of something is far scarier. Rob's work was perfect, but the dark parts were the most important, because you have to imagine what is there."

Tying directly in with Fincher and Khondji's mindset of modernism, the crimes of *Pride and Greed* stand out starkly, with white surfaces and bright lighting punctuated by pools of blood — much like Argento's *Tenebrae*. "After Gluttony and Sloth, these were totally different situations," the cinematographer says. "The room of the *Pride* murder was lit entirely from the windows with 20Ks and Dino lights, 24 Par lights, coming through a lot of diffusion. The concept was that there would be no shadows, with the room being just a wall of creamy soft daylight. There were windows in two directions, so there was no need for fill.

"To continue shooting wide open and maintain the depth of field, we used ND filters to bring everything down. We often did that unless David wanted to have the depth to cover something.

"So here the horror does not stem from the darkness, from but the concept of the murder — how the woman has been killed."

And horrible it is. Seen in a sort of "before" picture hanging

prominently on one wall, the young victim has been grotesquely mutilated: her blood leads from an improvised surgery in the white-tiled bathroom to the bed where she is found. *I didn't kill her, she was given a choice* reads a bloody message on the wall, indicating that the woman chose death over a life of disfigurement. (Several types of stage blood were tested for their reaction to Khondji's elaborate processing/pushing method and the 93 stock.)

He notes, "The office high-rise setting for the *Greed* killing is similar, but it was shot with much wider-angle lenses and is more contrasty; daylight comes from one direction through windows, and is broken up by shadows running across the floor in a sort of Venetian-blind effect."

Also shot here was a nighttime sequence in which the detectives use special ultraviolet lights to discover the words *help me* scrawled on the wall in a sort of "invisible ink" bodily fluid — leading them to believe that the killer wants to be stopped. To achieve the effect, Khondji simply used real UV tubes and reactive paint, again shooting wide open.

Fortunately, *Seven* occasionally escapes the phantasmagoric realm of serial murder for respites in the "regular" world, add-

ing delineation between the detectives' horror-filled profession and their home life. However, warns Khondji, "the only parts of the movie where you really feel sunlight are at the beginning and then the end — the rest is very creepy." In one brighter sequence at Mills' apartment, he and Somerset sit on the couch, examining a series of photos before them. Khondji's lighting setup, placed on the floor in front of Freeman and Pitt, consisted of a small soft-light cut with multiple flags, accenting only key portions of his frame. Explains Khondji, "I often use this technique of using a single source and cutting it so there is just a little bit of light coming through; it looks more natural. And for the eyes, I always use a Kino Flo tube under or over the lens to add a highlight. Flagged off with some black tape, it doesn't light the face, but just leaves a line across the eyes."

In completing *Seven*, Khondji takes with him not only new film techniques but his new passion for Primo lenses. He says, "They are commonly used here in United States, but elsewhere we usually use Cookes or Zeisses. But the Primo is a fantastic modern lens and from now on I will use Cookes or Primos, especially Primos if I am shooting in the city.

"But what we also did differently on this picture was to underexpose so much, to go into the darkness. And only the director can lead you so far, because you can't go by yourself. David Fincher deserves a lot of credit. It was his influence that pushed me to experiment and got me as far as I did on *Seven*."

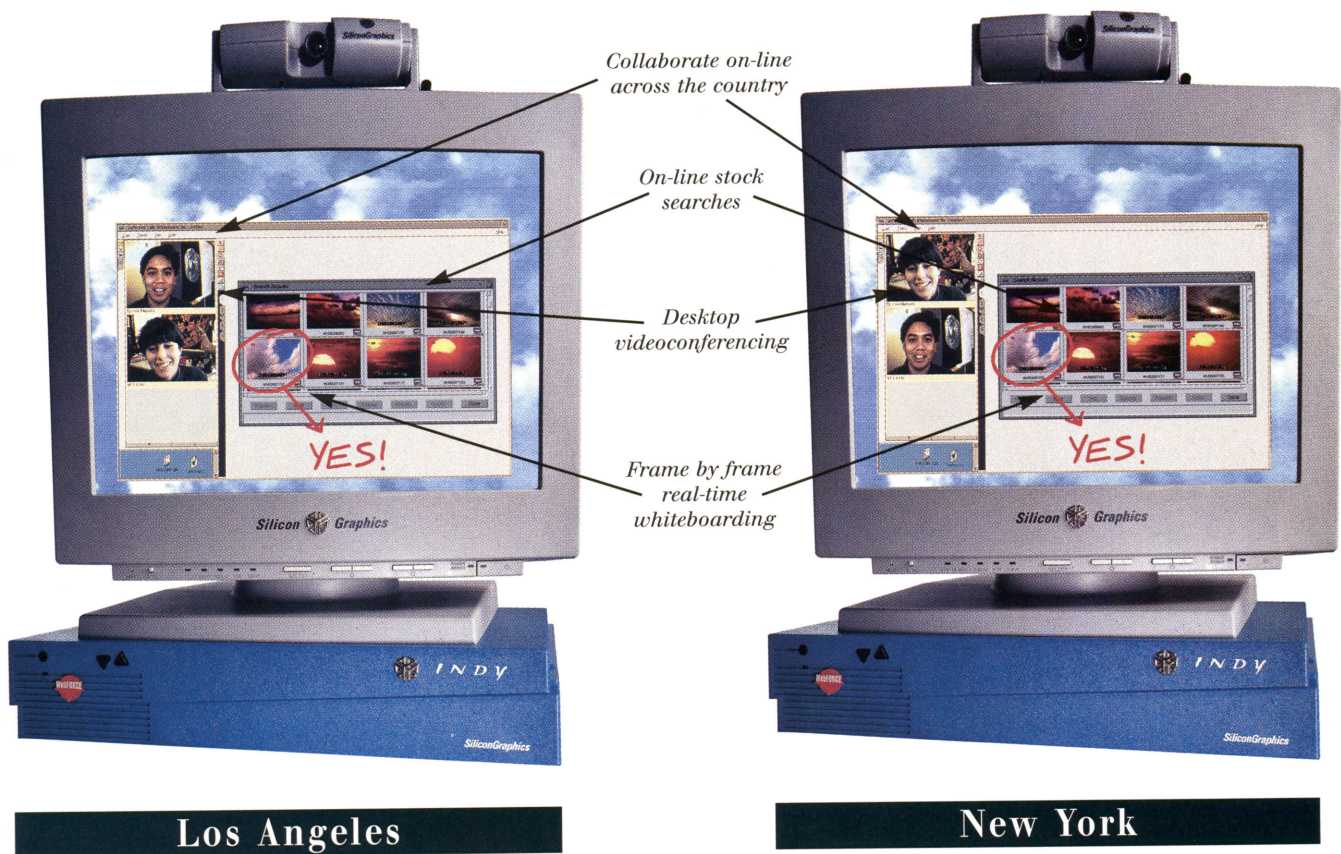
Khondji is currently in Italy shooting *Stealing Beauty* for director Bernardo Bertolucci. Not surprisingly, the situation is an exciting one for the cinematographer. He admits with good humor, "Before I started, I told him that it was like walking on a tightrope. Like looking down to see the films he and Vittorio Storaro had made together. But now, it's like working beside a source of inspiration that never runs out. I have never shot like this before; it's incredible. After the first day, the fear was gone."





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A man with dark hair, wearing a dark jacket over a dark shirt, is looking down and slightly to his left. He is standing in front of a dark, heavily textured background that resembles a metallic surface with rivets or bolts. The lighting is dramatic, casting shadows on his face and the background.

ARE MY HANDS TIED?  
HOW CAN I MAKE THIS LOOK UNIQUE?  
IT'S ALL BEEN DONE BEFORE  
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THE EMERGENCY-ROOM DOORS BURST open and a gurney comes hurtling down the corridor. Doctors and nurses descend upon it with well-practiced precision, shouting out orders as they maneuver the bed through a maze of people and into the trauma area. Backpedaling down the hallway in front of the action, anticipating every twist and smoothly capturing every turn, is Steadicam operator Guy Bee.

Bee is one of the magicians behind *ER*, NBC's hit medical series, now in its second season. One of the few truly innovative shows to hit the airwaves, the hour-long drama is known as much for its action-packed pace and non-traditional shooting and lighting style as for its well-written storylines and attractive cast of wholly believable characters.

Director of photography Richard Thorpe, who has been with the series since its third episode, says the show's groundbreaking visual style was actually the brainchild of director Rod Holcomb and cinematographer Tom Del Ruth, ASC, who worked together on the pilot. Del Ruth, who won two ASC awards for his work on *ER*, says he aimed for a documentary look and feel, with free-flowing staging and commensurately free-flowing lighting.

"Michael Crichton's original script was set in a Boston hospital on St. Patrick's Day," notes Del Ruth. The setting was modeled after Massachusetts General Hospital where Crichton, the show's creator and author, served his own medical apprenticeship in the early Seventies. "It was an eye-opening look at what physicians at a lower-middle-class hospital were encountering over a 24-hour holiday period. An event-driven drama which barely scratched the surface of who the characters were, the script suggested an extraordinarily hyper-real environment in which doctors and hospital staffers found themselves in one medical emergency after another. To Rod and me, that meant taking an almost documentary approach."

"Our lighting made no attempt to flatter the actors," continues Del Ruth. "We wanted a strong, piercing hot light and a strong contrast, where characters

were either in the light or out of it. If they were dark, that was fine, and if they were brilliantly lit because of the overhead illumination — well, the harshness of it added to the drama."

The two-hour pilot was shot inside an abandoned hospital, the Linda Vista in East Los Angeles. Del Ruth couldn't ask for a better setting. He utilized the hospital's own lighting system, overhead fluorescents which threw

wanted. He ended up using only half of them.

Del Ruth also installed can lights in the ceilings, putting them on dimmers. "We had 500-watt lights in them, which were very raw, and we brought them full up on the dimmers so that when somebody walked under one of them they turned to vapor — i.e., they became overexposed, which added a lot of punctuation to the set."

## Diagnosing *ER*'s Practical Approach

The much-lauded medical drama takes lighting cues from real life while injecting cinematic energy into television's visual language.

by Jean Oppenheimer

out the harsh light he was seeking, and employed a Steadicam to snake through the labyrinth of hospital corridors.

When the series moved to Warner Bros.' stage 11, construction workers built an almost exact replica of Linda Vista, enlarging it a bit and adding windows to some of the rooms. A drop ceiling, clearly visible in many shots, completes the set, making it as close to a practical location as can be imagined on a soundstage. Even the AC outlets work. "It's convenient," explains Thorpe. "You can plug lights and monitors into the outlets, which saves running cables all over the floor, an added consideration with a Steadicam."

Lighting panels, consisting of 40-watt fluorescent bulbs, are built into the ceilings, exactly as they were at Linda Vista. According to Del Ruth, the art department went a little overboard, doubling the number of lights and giving the set a much brighter look than he

Thorpe stuck closely to his predecessor's lighting plan, with a few slight modifications. He reduced the can lights to 300 watts and uses blackened egg crates to cut down on the light coming from the fluorescents. For close-ups, he occasionally adds a little bit of blue bounce fill, usually with a Tweenie. Additionally, he has placed a couple of movie lights outside the hospital room windows to simulate sunlight or suggest nighttime. He uses standard Mole Richardsons; depending on the size of the area, he employs a 20K, 10K, 5K or a junior.

Whereas Crichton, Holcomb and Del Ruth envisaged *ER* almost as a documentary, the term most often used to describe the program these days is "action-drama." Co-executive producer/director Mimi Leder, who directed six of last year's episodes as well as this season's opener, says the creative team wanted the show to have "a real action feel: an intense, frenetic



look, different from other medical programs."

One way they keep up the pace is with a Steadicam: Bee shoots 60-70% of the show with it. The conventionally-shot scenes, however, more than make up for the "one-ers." While a standard hour-long show contains 300 to 400 cuts, editors Randy Morgan and Jim Gross say a typical *ER* episode has 700 to 800.

Despite this radical editing approach, *ER*'s major contribution to the television series format is its heavy reliance on the Steadicam. Although a popular fixture in the feature film world, the camera mount is rarely employed in television. Not only is it an expensive tool to use — and a difficult one to use well — the time constraints of shooting a weekly series would seem to prohibit its application — or so the accepted wisdom had it before *ER* proved

otherwise. Del Ruth also shot some 70% of the pilot with a Steadicam, but not all the shots were the typical moving shots one associates with the unit. Because the cramped quarters of the Linda Vista location made it difficult to place and maneuver a regular camera, the Steadicam was used to get conventional coverage.

So fluid and lyrical is the camerawork on the show that Thorpe was asked recently whether the filmmakers had access to some new state-of-the-art Steadicam. "No," replied the cinematographer with a smile, "we use a state-of-the-art Steadicam operator."

That operator, the 31-year old Bee, got his start at a motion picture equipment rental house. "I was the guy who would set up the Steadicam for rental and check it back in to make sure all the toys that went out came back," Bee says. He honed his shooting skills by

it because you're the guy who's seeing it."

Bee says one of his chief responsibilities is creating a sense of depth on the screen. "The bottom line is that we have a two-dimensional medium and we are trying desperately to create that third

dimension of depth. The way you do that is with foreground objects, things that wipe in front of the lens and remind you, 'Wow, this is three dimensions.'"

To that end, some 45 extras cruise the corridors of Cook County General at any given time: doctors and nurses striding purposefully down the corridors, patients milling around the hallways and waiting rooms. It's up to Bee, along with second assistant director Michael Pendel, to place the extras, and he expressly sets them up to get in his way, along with IV stands, surgical equipment, and gurneys careening around corners. "I call it the treachery factor," he laughs.

With a 70-pound Panaflex Lightweight strapped to his body (including the vest, arm and sled that the operator wears), Bee races backwards down hallways, miraculously avoiding collisions while keeping the viewer right at the center of the action. Lithe and slender (proof you don't have to be a big, hulking guy to operate a Steadicam), he glides through the constant flow of traffic like a slalom racer gracefully skirting penalty poles.

Bee never uses a spotter ("Why should two of us fall down

*Hot, sourcey lighting reflects the emotional dynamics of the emergency ward in ER, as does the show's free-flowing camerawork.*



Photos courtesy of Warner Bros. Television

demonstrating how the equipment worked at trade shows and workshops. When the rental house closed, Bee started working as an operator. He calls his job on *ER* "the greatest gig in the world" and has turned down several features to stay with it.

Bee makes it all look easy, but in fact there are no simple shots. "You have this massive checklist of things to look for," he explains. "Not only are you trying to tell a story, but you're also looking for technical problems. If there is a hot spot or something that needs to be addressed by the lighting guys or grips, you have to be on



ER's standing set primarily utilizes a mixture of fluorescent and dimmer-rigged can lights set into the ceiling (see diagram below). Taking over for Tom Del Ruth, ASC after the pilot, cinematographer Richard Thorpe modified the practical-light design by decreasing wattage in the fixtures and using blue bounce fill when necessary.



when just one can?" he quips). During rehearsal he memorizes the many twists and turns he'll be required to make. When the camera rolls, he knows exactly where the corners are coming up and where that open door is lurking.

According to Bee, the

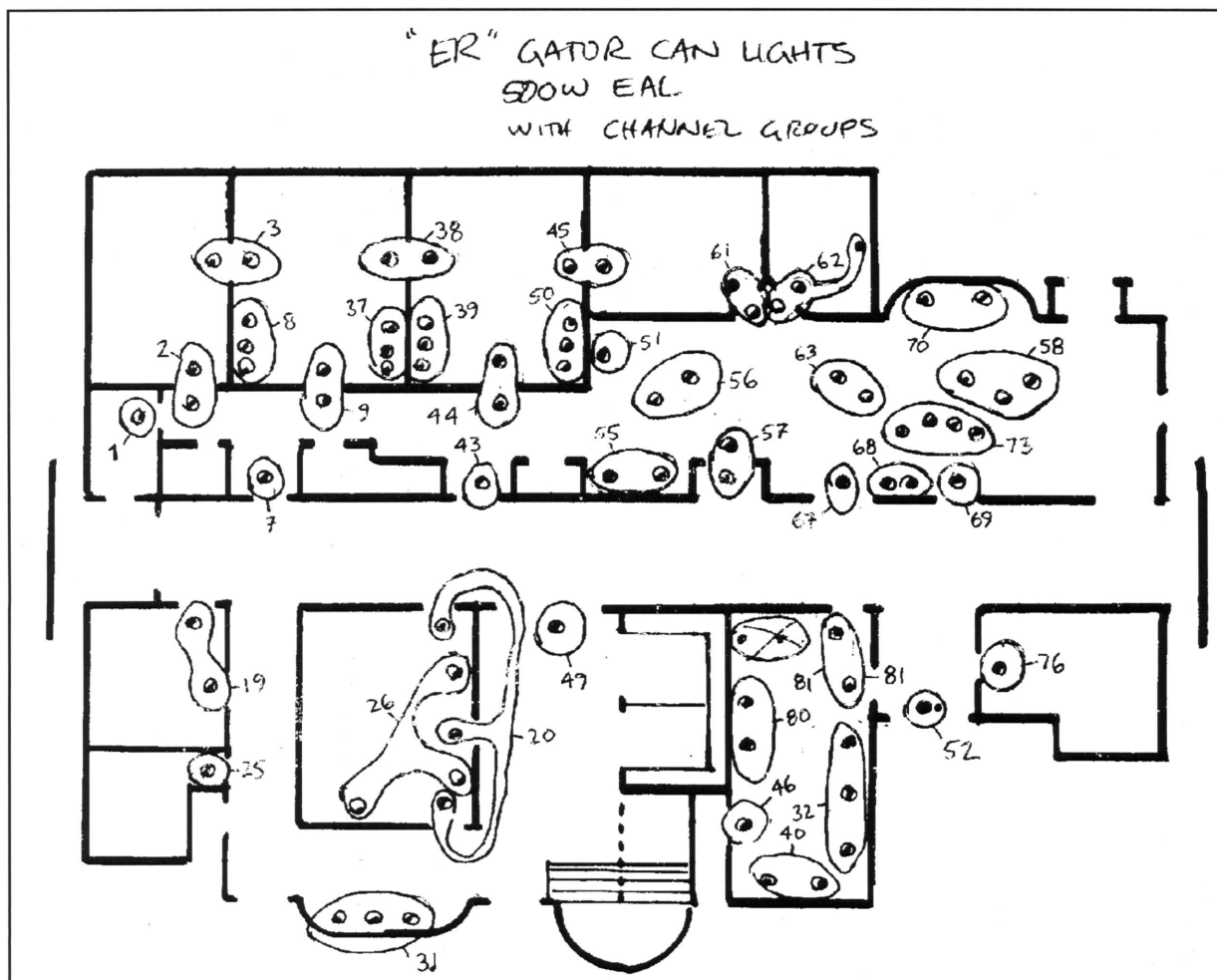
beauty of the Steadicam over handheld or other forms of operating is the peripheral vision it allows. There is no such thing as an eyepiece; what used to be the eyepiece is a tiny video assist monitor, situated about waist level.

The unit has both a pan-

tilt and a roll axis. "When you see bad Steadicam, that roll axis is the first thing you notice," explains Bee. "It's like being on a boat; everything is rocking back and forth and you get that seasick feeling. But you get to a point in your experience where you get a handle on that."

The Steadicam is more than just a locomotive system; it is a storytelling tool. Up until *ER*, medical dramas traditionally relied on set pieces: pan somebody in, sit them in a chair, then cut to an over-the-shoulder shot. The Steadicam pulls the audience into the action — and the storyline — in a way that more conventional camerawork and editing doesn't. It calls for a whole new approach to conceptualizing and staging scenes, a challenge which falls on not only the cameraman and director but also the writer.

Jim Hayman, ASC, who directed two episodes of the popular series last season, says, "In *ER*





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Right: One of the first shows to so heavily capitalize on the Steadicam, *ER* owes much of its uniquely frenetic aesthetic to operator Guy Bee, who also runs A-camera. Below: As diagrammed, Thorpe uses an array of sources to simulate daylight streaming into the hospital set through windows and doorways.

the camera is a character and the style of the show allows you to use it to kind of elbow your way into the scene, so that the audience is drawn into the scene as opposed to watching it from a distance. It's almost as if somebody is going to hand you, the viewer, a scalpel."

The set also serves as a character. "Because it works almost as a location set and you return to

that same location every week," explains Hayman, "it becomes yet another character and the human characters interact with it. You have to use the set as it is, and as a cameraman-turned-director that is very interesting to me."

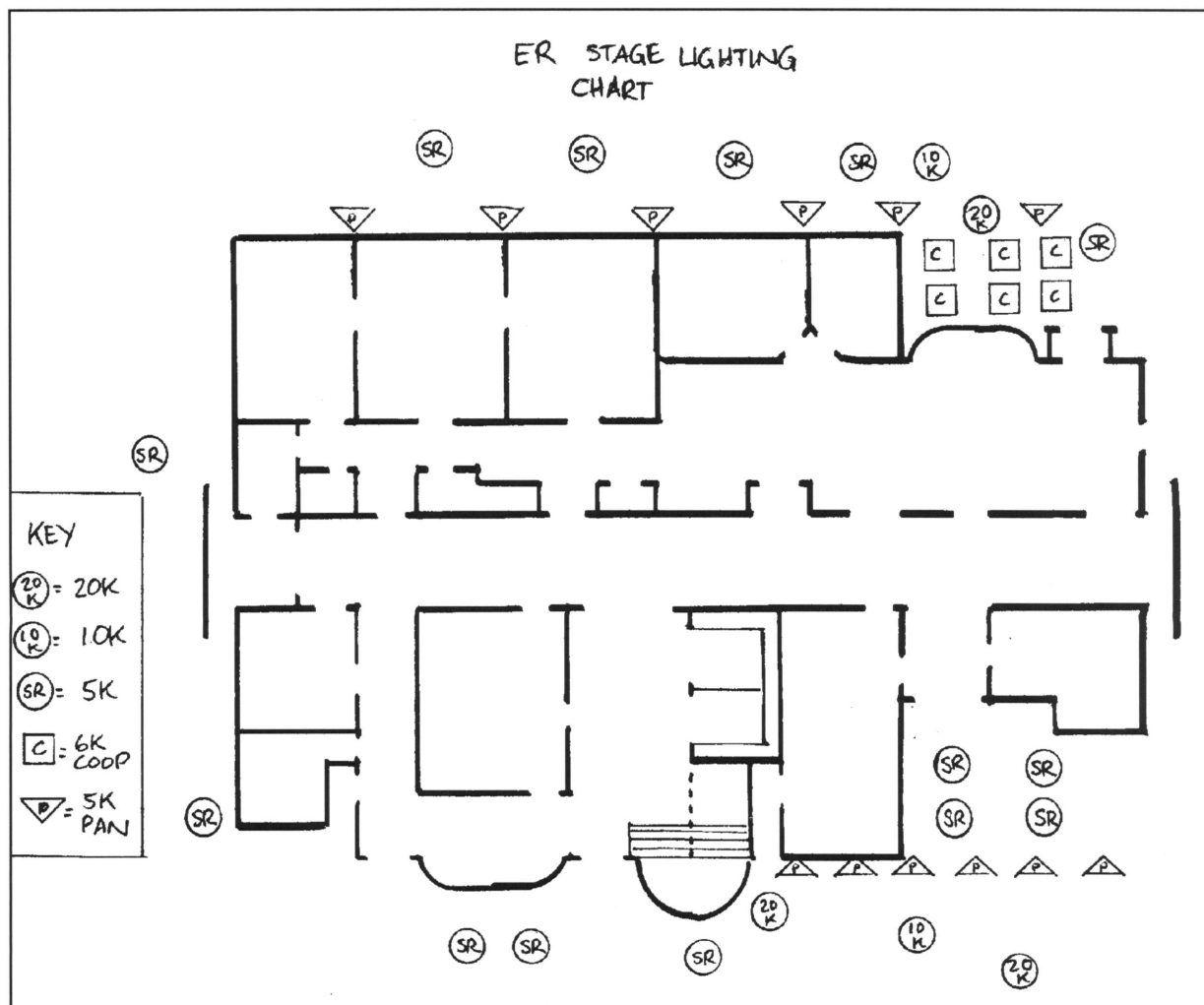
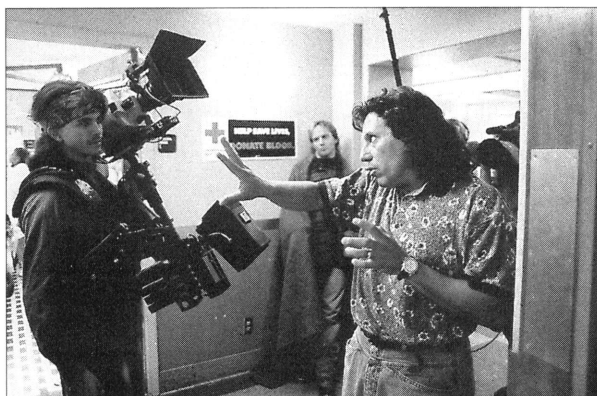
Like an increasing number of movies and television programs, *ER* is shot on film and transferred to tape, a process rife with potential disaster. Each camera-

man handles the transfer dilemma differently. Del Ruth chose to "dramatically underexpose the film on the pilot. The networks have a tendency when they transmit to pump up the gain, which increases the noise a little bit and gives it a

slightly grainier look, which is what I wanted."

Thorpe takes a different approach, overexposing the film at least one stop and using predominantly blue light everywhere. "I like to give a thick blue negative," he explains, "because I have found that it's the best kind of negative to give to the tape people for the transfer to videotape. [On a weekly series, the cameraman has no opportunity to oversee the telecine transfer.] With the type of process that exists today — where you're shooting negative and that negative is being color-corrected as it's transferred to videotape — an overexposed blue negative gives the colorist the most latitude to do different things. They can make it any color they want."

Thorpe, who was director of photography on *China Beach*, another hit series produced by John Wells and Mimi Leder, never had to worry about such transfers





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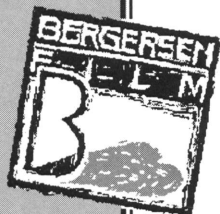


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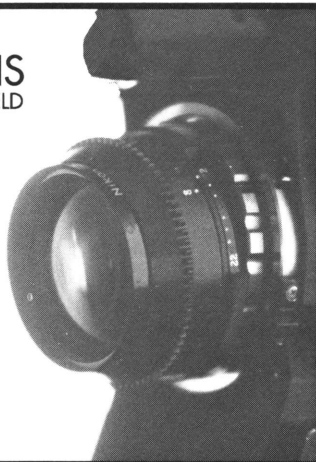


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**D U R A B L E**

on earlier shows. "China Beach was film-to-film," he says, adding, "Ah, the good old days." Prior to that series, the English-born Thorpe worked as a camera assistant on yet a third medical show, *M.A.S.H.*

Thorpe usually keeps a 24mm lens on the Steadicam (he uses standard Panavision) and always shoots at f4, resulting in an extraordinary depth-of-field range — another of *ER*'s visually arresting details. To give the longer hallways a stacked look, particularly if shooting through a lot of people, Thorpe throws a 100, 150 or 300mm lens on the A-camera.

In addition to the Steadicam, Bee operates the A-camera, which he explains is almost always on a dolly. "We may not use it for an on-air move, but the dolly gives us the ability to wheel in where we want without having to move a set of tripod sticks everywhere. Also, the dolly gives us a booming capability. And the floor is flat enough that we don't have to lay track or boards." Occasionally Bee will hoist the camera onto his shoulder and shoot handheld.

Bee shifts back and forth between the A-camera and the Steadicam, depending upon which is needed for a particular setup. For a two-minute scene in the hospital lunch room involving nurse Carol Hathaway (Julianna Margulies) giving instructions to the other nurses, he slings the A-camera atop his shoulder. They rehearse, then shoot the scene three or four times — Bee says the average is five or six takes, 14 to 18 on the Steadicam. But no one dawdles between shots; shooting eight or nine pages a day on an eight-day schedule, they can't afford to.

Back at the emergency-room set, director Leder doesn't like the way the scene is unfolding. "Hey, I didn't say 'cut'!" she barks, her voice assuming the authority of an emergency room physician overseeing a roomful of interns. "Go back on the bell. Let's continue." Two minutes later the shot is in the bag and Leder lets out a small smile. "Okay, now cut."



THE MOST FAMOUS PRIMAL SCREAM IN the American theatrical canon was first heard on the stage of the Barrymore Theatre in New York on December 3, 1947. When 23-year-old Marlon Brando, as the tormented and brutal Stanley Kowalski, bellowed "Stella!", he heralded a new era in dramatic acting. The event was the premiere of the Tennessee Williams masterpiece, *A Streetcar Named Desire*. The stage production was directed by Elia Kazan, and the play went on to win the Pulitzer Prize. In 1951 Kazan and Williams adapted the play into an Academy Award-winning film starring Brando, Vivian Leigh, Karl Malden and Kim Hunter.

From the live television of the Fifties through contemporary large-scale productions like *Death of a Salesman*, the small screen has always been fascinated with the presentation of theatrical plays. Now CBS is mounting a new version of *Streetcar Named Desire*, featuring Jessica Lange as Blanche DuBois, Alec Baldwin as Stanley Kowalski, Diane Lane as Stella and John Goodman as Mitch. The project was directed by Glenn Jordan and photographed by Ralf Bode, ASC.

Television and feature filmmaking have been cross-pollinating for decades. Theatrical feature films have long been presented on television, and many popular TV series have been adapted into successful feature films. Likewise, motion picture camera technique has inspired and influenced the look of television, while the visual language of TV has changed the way we look at films. Directors of photography frequently move back and forth between the two distinctly different mediums, but the basic purpose of telling a story with images serves as a vital link.

Cinematographer Ralf Bode — whose impressive feature credits include *Saturday Night Fever*, *Coal Miner's Daughter* (for

## Still Potent, *A Streetcar Named Desire* Hits the Small Screen

The emotions of Tennessee Williams' classic play remain as raw as ever in a new CBS production directed by Glenn Jordan and photographed by Ralf Bode, ASC.

by Vincent LoBrutto



which he received an Academy Award nomination), *Dressed to Kill*, *Gorky Park*, *The Accused*, *Cousins*, *Love Field*, *Don Juan DeMarco* and *The Big Green* — was born in Berlin and came to the United States when he was 13. In his last year of

high school he became involved in theater and won a dramatic speech contest. He studied acting at the University of Vermont and later worked as an actor in Off-Broadway theater in New York. After a year Bode decided to study directing at the prestigious Yale School of Drama. This was during the Vietnam War era, and Bode was drafted into military service, where he was given the opportunity to go to motion picture school. There he met cinematographer Robert M. Young, who later shot *Nothing But a Man* and directed *Short Eyes* and *The Ballad of Gregorio Cortez*.

"I had made movies on the side with Army equipment," says Bode. "Bob saw some of my work and said, 'You have a good

*Mitch (John Goodman) and Blanche DuBois (Jessica Lange) face off amidst Bode's atmospheric lighting. The cinematographer cites the classic 1951 feature version of Streetcar, photographed by Harry Stradling, ASC, as an inspiration.*



eye; would you like to work on my next film when you get out of the Army?' The film was *The Plot Against Harry*, directed by Michael Roemer. One day while I was still in the service, we were having coffee at Bickford's on 55th Street and Broadway. Bob said, 'What do you want to do if you work with me?' and I answered, 'Well, I'd like to work with a camera.' He said, 'I'll tell you what, you can learn that in a very short period of time. I want you to become an electrician because I think you should learn

**"Wide shots work in television. They work!" Bode stresses. "We've been seeing old movies on television, and it works. *Streetcar* definitely is not a close-up movie. It's all movement."**

about lighting — that's really important. Photography is all about looking and seeing.' I replied, 'Okay, whatever you say.' I was so excited talking to Bob that I poured the milk in the sugar bowl instead of in my coffee."

Bode worked as an electrician, gaffer and lighting director before director John Avildsen gave him the chance to serve as director of photography on *The Stoolie*, starring Jackie Mason. Bode later rejoined with Avildsen to photograph the gritty Philadelphia exterior sequences for *Rocky*. Since then, the cinematographer has gone on to work with many other prominent directors, including Michael Apted, Brian DePalma, Jonathan Kaplan and John Badham.

The road to Bode's work on *Streetcar* began during his acting days in New York, when he first saw Elia Kazan's film version at the Thalia, a legendary repertory theater. "I was blown away by it," Bode recalls. "The scene I remember the best is the climax of the film, when Blanche talks about herself to Mitch up on a cove on the levy, and the water is shimmering." The film's range of light and

dark tones, captured in black-and-white by director of photography Harry Stradling, ASC, effectively translated the psychological state of the fragile Blanche Dubois to the screen. "I thought Stradling's photography was absolutely wonderful," Bode proclaims. "People thought [the film] was dark, but in the play Blanche talks about not wanting to be seen in the light. When she first meets Stella she asks her to turn the light off. Towards the end of the play, Mitch says to her, 'I've never seen you with the lights on.' He then rips off the lamp shade and turns on a bare bulb which is absolutely blinding. So there is this notion that it needs to be dark, and Stradling understood that."

A searing psychodrama, *Streetcar* dissects the mental collapse of the damaged southern belle Blanche DuBois, who travels to a sweltering New Orleans to visit her sister Stella. Stella is married to Stanley Kowalski, a brute whose sexual terrorism dominates the household and catapults Blanche into madness.

Bode's primary challenge was to interpret *Streetcar* in color. "The production designer, Fred Harpman, did a magnificent job designing the set," Bode remarks. "We built a courtyard in 1:1 scale with a wall around it and a street beyond it. It's a [reproduction of] a small section of the French Quarter of New Orleans called Elysian Fields. We also built a two-story house in 1:1 scale. The house stands next to a railroad yard, and it's gone to seed. Basically, we made everything in warm earth tones to contrast with the green outside, the palm trees. We were spraying the leaves so they were always green and glistening. You always get a feel and a sense of hot and heat. The Hudson Sprayer was going full-tilt during the entire 30-day production."

"We used a lot of neon as well. There's a jazz club, a bordello and a pawn shop in the Quarter so there are a lot of different colors of neon. We had reds, blues, yellows, greens and magentas. You became aware of the color and of the life around it."

Bode, who earned an Emmy nomination for his cinematography on last year's acclaimed television production of *Gypsy*, starring Bette Midler, approaches the television medium with the same artistic intentions as he does a theatrical feature. When moving from theatrical to television productions, Bode ignores the mental "it's television" switch which has plagued and belittled the medium in the past. "The only switch in my head is to try to get it done on a schedule that's slightly more limited than a movie schedule," he maintains. "To me, *that* is the difference between film and television: you just simply have less time. This is a two-and-a-half-hour program. For a two-hour feature we take anywhere between 50 and 60 days. We did this in 30 days, so that means we did five pages a day on average. It clearly can be done and done well. You just have to have a director who really knows what he wants, and Glenn Jordan is such a director. He comes well prepared."

"I was involved in rehearsals for three weeks prior to production. I shot the rehearsals with a Canon A1 Camcorder and used a Steadicam Jr. as a camera platform. I used the screen as a monitor; that way, Glenn and I were both able to see what I was putting on tape. I use the video camera like a sketch pad. We tried angles, we tried moves. We sketched it out and Glenn took copious notes on post-its and incorporated them into the script. By the time we were ready to shoot, we knew where the camera was going to be. There was always room for refinement, but there weren't huge changes."

"Preproduction and rehearsals save an extraordinary amount of production time. Planning the shots with the director is really important because that saves everybody's time. I must have eight hours of rehearsal tapes of *Streetcar*. During production I would refer to the tape. I had a little setup next to the dimmer board in the back of the stage. I would go over the tapes with my gaffer, Jay Fortune, and my operator, Peter Gulla."



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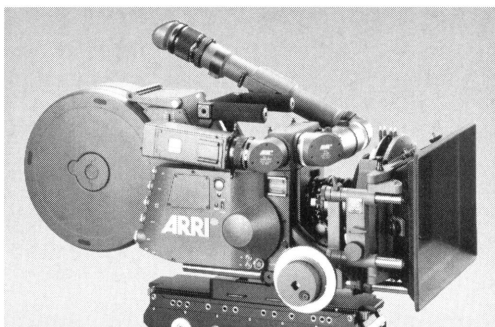
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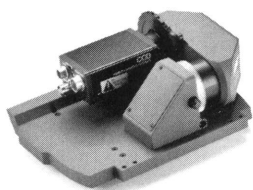
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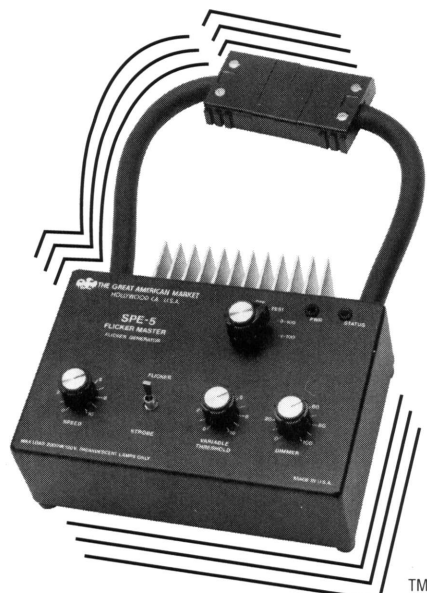
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"The only way you can meet a short shooting schedule is to do long takes, so it was not unusual for us to do between three- and five-minute takes. You're not just doing a close-up of part of a speech, but you're doing a five-minute chunk of a play with all the movement and intensity."

Bode feels strongly that the grammar of cinematography should articulate the script regardless of the medium. "Wide shots work in television. They work!" he stresses. "We've been seeing old movies on television, and it works. *Streetcar* definitely is not a close-up movie. It's all movement. The characters move, the camera moves — it works very well. A really good script will tell you where you need a close-up; you just have to be sensitive to the material. We did a close-up when it was really applicable, when Glenn would say he needed a close-up on a particular moment. So Glenn picked the close-ups for specific moments and he was always open to suggestions as to where another moment might be. Glenn Jordan is a wonderful director for a cinematographer to work with; he has a great sense of where the camera should be."

Jordan also attended the Yale School of Drama and is a veteran television director with such distinguished credits as the Hallmark Hall of Fame presentations of *O Pioneers!* and *Sarah, Plain and Tall*, as well as HBO's *Barbarians at the Gate*. In addition to his many television credits, Jordan has directed the feature films *Only When I Laugh*, *The Buddy System* and *Mass Appeal*.

Movement is the cardinal element in interpreting the drama, story and characters of *A Streetcar Named Desire*. "There's lots and lots of camera choreography," Bode explains. "The camera is always moving, and it's dramatically applicable. It isn't just movement for the sake of itself. We used a Fisher 10 dolly and a dolly board that key grip Phil Sloan introduced to me on *Gypsy*. It's made of PVC, the material used to make plumbing pipes. This stuff is amazing; it's so smooth, it's like rolling on glass. And it doesn't chip, so it lasts for a long time. If the floor is good you

put it straight on the floor. If the floor is not smooth you first lay down plywood, then you lay the sheets of PVC on top of the plywood. It's very fast and very smooth. We had a very good dolly grip in Cliff Sperry. We used a Steadicam for shots where we moved very quickly from one room to the other, and went handheld for some of the more violent parts — such as the scene in which Stanley gets drunk. We also used a small crane outside the house to get some moving, high-angle shots."

*A Streetcar Named Desire* was shot with Panavision cameras in the 1:66 format for the CBS network presentation. "I used a fast stock, Kodak's 5298, rated at 400," Bode details. "I literally taped off the f-stop and shot the entire film at T4. Your eye really gets accustomed to that f-stop. You check yourself with a light meter every once in a while, but I don't measure an area for every shot. There were a couple of places where we needed more depth of field because we wanted to see extra sharply on a larger area. I took it up to 5.6 or 8 for a couple of shots, but basically the show was done at T4. We used a computer dimmer board for our light cues, particularly for the ambiance outside, because some of the scenes take place at dusk and Glenn wanted it to get dark outside during a scene. Jay Fortune and the dimmer operator would time out the length of the entire scene and build in time for the fade. When we shot five minutes of a 15-minute scene we always knew where we were on the dimmer board."

Bode utilized the Primo 17.5 to 75mm zoom lens and found 35mm to be most effective for telling the Tennessee Williams story. "The 35mm was the sort of 'lens de project' because the 29mm already starts to make things look a little bit bigger, and we didn't want the place to be spacious. The entire story basically takes place in the same rooms downstairs in Stella and Stanley's apartment, and in the courtyard. Each scene has a different time of day, a different feeling and a different mood, but once you're in a scene you have to zero





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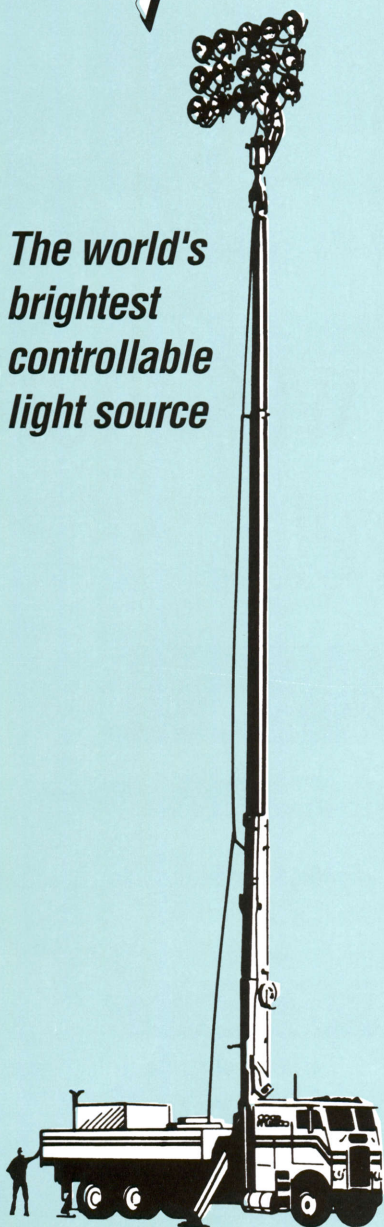
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in on the lighting for that particular mood."

The finishing of a television project differs from that of a theatrical release, and Bode used the process to enhance the creative possibilities inherent in the original photography. "In timing a theatrical feature, I might look at the entire film on a Monday and say, 'This is a little too this and a little too that.' Then the following Monday I would see the results of those comments a week before. In television you sit with a colorist and say,

"On *Streetcar* we had several 'dynamics' within takes because the contrast range is much smaller on video than it is on film; you can compress this into television and make it look really quite wonderful."

'Make that color a little warmer or a little bit cooler,' or 'I think this shot is a little too contrasty,' and the colorist makes the changes right then and there — it's very immediate. In the final transfer they can change the contrast, the black level, the white level, the color saturation — whatever changes you can make on your TV set at home. So there's a lot more control. I was able to transfer *Streetcar* three times in different formats. The broadcast version was done from digital Beta, component. The negative was transferred to Beta and we used that as a master to make the final cut. We did a timed film version so that the film could be seen on the big silver screen. The last version was the director's cut, which is five minutes longer. We went from the original negative to tape. *That* was absolutely the best.

"The timing is slightly different on a film for television because you can change the gamma, you can change the contrast. In long takes like the ones we had in *Streetcar*, you can change the color, the brightness level and the contrast within a scene. You build in what they call 'dynamics.' You'll start out with a setting at the beginning of the scene, but then the cam-

era pans as the character moves to the right of the set, and maybe it's a touch darker — make an adjustment where you want to start the change — to make that second area a little bit brighter and, let's say, get rid of the ugly green. So now you go back to the top of the shot. With the computer and the electronics, as the camera pans to the right with the character, the settings change automatically. Suddenly it gets brighter, but you will never be able to tell. On *Streetcar* we had several 'dynamics' within takes

because the contrast range is much smaller on video than it is on film; you can compress this into television and make it look really quite wonderful. The colorists take their work very, very seriously

and there's a real ego involvement in the project. They talk about other colorists the way I talk about other cinematographers. They really are artists. You can adapt the look of a film on television; the potential is there. You can do it."

"I sat with the editor, David Simmons, on the last pass," Bode recalls. "It was a collaboration. When you sit there for eight hours, perspective is a great commodity. The colorist, Michael Volland at IVC, was wonderful and is himself a still photographer. It was a wonderful creative environment. None of us were afraid to speak up and everybody involved in the session had the best interests of the film at heart. It was a very satisfying experience."

Bode looks at television as another powerful and creative medium that cinematographers can use to tell cinematic stories. "To say, 'I'm a feature guy and I won't do anything else' is to limit yourself," he concludes. "There are wonderful projects to be made in the smaller format. Television is a visual medium and it does lend itself to creative expression." ✻



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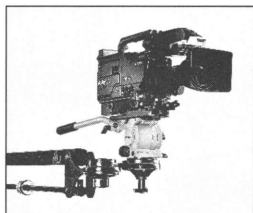
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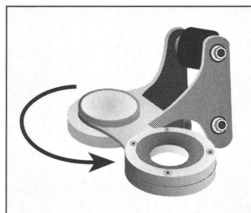
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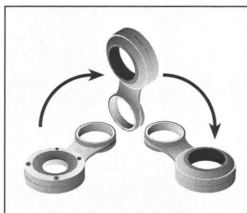
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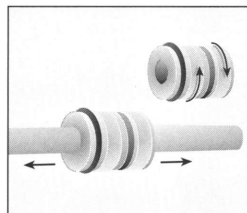
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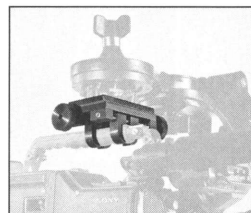
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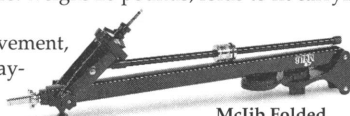


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# 16mm Makes Inroads in Network Television Production

Cost savings and image quality have turned the format into a trend.

by Eric Rudolph

OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS, 16MM has gained significant acceptance as a low-cost, high-quality format for prime-time network dramatic television series production. How has a format long considered inadequate for even top-of-the-line music videos become acceptable for million-dollar Big Three network shows? Some would say it is due to the quality of Kodak's T-grain films, improved production camera systems and lenses, a desire to prepare for the coming of 16:9 wide-screen TV, as well as a growing sophistication among labs and transfer facilities. Others explain the format's rise much more simply: shooting for

television in 16mm costs less than 35mm.

Unlike theatrical features, where the cost of a 35mm blow-up can wipe out any savings gained

by using 16mm (and degrade the image quality with an extra optical step), TV series no longer make film prints. Therefore, the cost differential can be significant. While the savings fall far short of closing the gap between network license fees and production costs, experts say using 16mm instead of 35mm can save \$15-35,000 in gear rental and film stock costs per one-hour television episode.

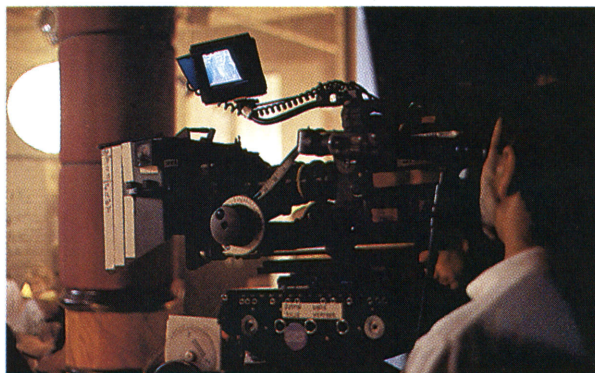
Big Three network dramatic series shot in 16mm and Super 16 have included *The Wonder Years*, *The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles*, *The Commish* and *Sweet Justice*. Current and new shows shot in 16mm and Super 16 include *Picket Fences*; *Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman*; *The Monroes*; *Walker, Texas Ranger*; *Central Park West* and *Homicide: Life on the Street*.

Aside from the cost savings, another reason for shooting Super 16 is a desire to increase a show's long-term market value for HDTV or other wide-screen television formats. Super 16 offers a 1:1.66 aspect ratio, which when cropped slightly top and bottom to 1:1.78 fits into

the wide-screen television format. "The wider aspect ratio of Super 16 gives a product shelf life; I think that is the number one reason it is being used for television," says Peter Abel of AbelCineTech Inc., which provided the Aaton XTR Super 16 camera packages for *In the Heat of the Night* during its final three seasons and currently provides similar packages to *Homicide*.

When handled carefully, 16mm can fool the experts. Clairmont Camera president Denny Clairmont recalled a demonstration sponsored by the Technical Council of Motion Picture and Television Industry, where the same scene was shot in formats from straight 16mm to 65mm. "Of course, the 65mm blew everything else away," Clairmont says. "However, when 16mm and 35mm were shown side by side, I couldn't tell the difference."

Right: An Arriflex 16SR-3 on the set of Central Park West. Below: Director of photography Geoffery Erb on the Zinc Bar set while shooting Central Park West.



Photos by Eric Rudolph





Clairmont and most other industry veterans surveyed credit the Kodak T-grain stocks as the primary reason why 16mm is gaining ground on 35mm in television. Other important factors are improvements in film tolerances, better telecine gates (critical to Super 16) and optics, and an overall change in attitude that results in better care being taken in handling 16mm, from the rental house to the camera loader, to lighting and telecine transfer.

According to Dave Kenig, technical director for Panavision Hollywood, "They've been using 16mm and Super 16 in England for years and they've been able to get over all the inherent problems; they've proved that people will turn on the TV and watch 16mm. Here in Hollywood there has always been a lot of resistance to 16mm."

While no one seemed certain what the first Big Three network prime-time dramatic show to shoot in 16mm was, most credit *The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles* as one of the first, and certainly most significant, shows to use the smaller format. A widely expressed opinion at the time was "If 16mm is good enough for [executive producer] George Lucas, it's good enough for us."

Veteran director of photography Frank E. Johnson, ASC, who shot *Wise Guy* in 35mm and the first season of *Walker, Texas Ranger* in standard 16mm, says he does not treat 16mm any differently than 35mm. He used 7287 rated at ISO 320 for most of his one season on *Walker* and "had no grain problems at all." Generally with 16mm, Johnson says, "you lose a lot of quality, but the producers and networks are accepting 16mm, so you just flow with it and make it work. I light the same and use the same filtration, just lower numbers, like eighths and quarters," to avoid the greater loss of picture quality higher-numbered filters could create.

The Arriflex 16SR-3, which was new when he used it on *Walker*, won praise from Johnson for its "efficiency, small size and easy magazine changes."

Johnson used 7287 rated at 500 ISO for some *Walker* night ex-



teriors, and he used a one-eighth Pro-Mist filter on some interiors "to smooth out some of the edges of the film." He was pleased with the results of both techniques. Johnson highly recommends 7287 (200 ISO), which he says Kodak made especially for telecine conversion, and which they recommend exposing at ISO 320 to 800 for 16mm transfer to video.

Johnson's biggest problem in using 16mm on *Walker* was the actual network transmission, a variable factor that was out of his control. "It's usually one young man with a waveform monitor in charge of transmission; if he gives it too much gain the whites milk out and it gets grainy." Johnson noticed great variations in the quality of the transmitted picture from show to show on the first season of *Walker*.

*Central Park West*, a new CBS Productions show, is shooting in standard 16mm with the Arriflex 16SR-3 on the streets of New York and on two floors of an industrial building in the heart of Greenwich Village. Says director of photography Geoffrey Erb, "Shooting on 16mm instead of 35mm is a purely economic decision. There are not a lot of advantages from my point of view." Erb uses 7298 and 7248 on *Central Park West*. He praises the

500 ISO 98 stock in the 35mm format, though he finds the 16mm version of the stock limiting in low-light situations. "The blacks really hold and the whites don't blow out in 35mm. With the 16mm version, I never get the blacks as tight as I want them."

"If I'm doing a moody scene, say a bedroom, and I want the light to look like it's from a single source, I'll key at 16 footcandles and fill at two footcandles, and I'll find sometimes that two footcandles is too much fill. I can't get the blacks to hold as tight as I would like, and to me that's a function of the fill and the inherent grain structure of 16mm."

Erb also notes, "We also have problems with hairs and scratches. I shot *The Equalizer* for four years on 35mm, a million feet of film a year, and I never had one technical problem that caused a re-shoot. Here, in week two I had a scratch and had to do a re-shoot. With 16mm that scratch is magnified by four times compared to 35mm."

However, the cinematographer acknowledges, "The producers tell me they save \$15,000 per episode using 16mm; that's a substantial amount of change. But 16mm is slower to work with; you have to do things like check the

**On the set of *Homicide*, Lt. Giardello (Yaphet Kotto) tackles some paperwork while Jean de Segonzac shoulders a camera.**



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gate more often. We spend more time cleaning magazines, and we rarely go off the set without two print takes of the master, medium and close-up to protect us from problems like hairs and scratches. Sometimes it requires five takes to get that second print take. That can cut into our lighting time for the next take, or it limits the amount of close-ups we can get in the next scene. Sometimes you walk off with a print take that's technically acceptable, but not great."

"Also, all of the accessories are less sophisticated than with 35mm; a 35mm zoom costs \$30,000 and the comparable lens for 16mm costs \$6,000," he continues. "There's a reason for that; in 35mm the optics are better, the mechanics are better, it's marked better. My assistants are having trouble because the lenses aren't scribed properly. The ground glass is smaller, and I don't get as much light for the video assist. 16mm is coming into the 20th Century, but for now it just doesn't work the same as 35mm."

Erb's operator, Alec Hirschfeld, sums up the 16mm experience by opining, "With 16mm, anything that's bad is twice as bad, and anything that's good will be only half as good. It's an unforgiving format. They took the best documentary camera, the Arriflex 16SR-3, and made it into a pretty good production camera, but it's still a documentary camera at heart." As an example, first assistant Doug Hart cites the camera's vestigial meter needle in the viewfinder, which they can't remove. "It doesn't move, but it is there all the time and looks like a mike in the shot," Hart says.

"On the other hand," Erb concludes, "Central Park West will be a terrific-looking show, one of the four or five best-looking shows on the air. It has quality production values. You can create a mood, which is what this job is, in 16mm or 35mm. You can get moonlight, a silhouette in the bedroom, a mood in a bar; it's the same mathematics, the same lights — it's just five percent grainier, that's all. Though I whine about not being able to get my blacks as tight as I'd like, the main disadvantages are the mechanics of the camera and the re-

sulting potential for more problems, which makes shooting more time-consuming."

Arthur Forney, supervising producer for *Law & Order*, says that the show's pilot was shot in Super 16mm seven years ago, but notes that the program switched to 35mm for regular production. At that time they were still required to deliver a 35mm print to the studio for their library, and making the blow-up was too expensive. Forney added that they were concerned that they would lose the cinema verité quality of the show with 35mm, and thought they might have to increase the grain in post. However, he says, "We were pleased with the way the show looked. 35mm makes the show more accessible to the audience, with a feature quality combined with the cinema verité look. A lot of *Law & Order* is handheld with a moving camera, but the increased weight of the 35mm camera has not been a problem." Forney's employer, Dick Wolf Productions, also produces *New York Undercover* in 16mm and Forney echoed others in saying that "negative dirt is always a problem. Shooting in 16mm is somewhat frustrating. It doesn't hold the blacks as well as 35mm."

A Super 16mm show which many agreed looks as if it is shot in 35mm is the critically-acclaimed NBC series *Homicide: Life on the Street*, which has been shot in Super 16 on location in Baltimore since it began in the 1991-92 season. *Homicide* combines a fluid, handheld documentary style with Hollywood-style production values and technical savvy. Jean de Segonzac, *Homicide's* director of photography for all but its first season, says the producers wanted the show to have a "gritty" look, but that he and his team did not want it to have a "lousy, messed-up 16mm look." De Segonzac, who shoots 95% of the show handheld, says the quality of the on-screen image comes from using only Kodak's 7293 200 ISO stock, a Cooke 10.4-52mm zoom (wide open at T2.8 on most interiors) on an Aaton XTR, a good team of gaffers, a meticulous camera team and a high-quality lab and transfer facility.



# “On the telephone to Clairmont, I can always get through to a decision-maker. Everything is taken care of then and there. Done. And I don’t need to follow up—the equipment will be there,” says Production Coordinator Devon Clark

“**O**ne morning on Baywatch, an actor crashed a Jeep into an ARRI 3 on sticks. The set called me; I called Irving. Can we get a replacement? Yes. Can we use a Clairmont driver? Yes. The new body with a new 10 to 1 was at our location ninety minutes later.”

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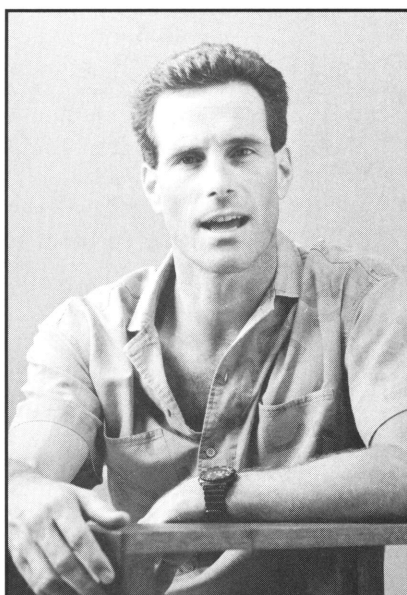
“That was an emergency, of course. But at some rental houses, it’s hard to reach a decision-maker. That can slow things down, emergency or not. With Clairmont, it’s one phone call to Irving or Jon; and a confirmation on the spot.”

## Following up

“During the run of any show,” says Devon Clark, “My mind is occupied constantly with people and things that have to be followed up on. Confirming arrangements, ensuring work is done, checking the paperwork.”

## Switched

“On Baywatch, we’re often working around water, salt spray and sand; so we rotate the cameras back to Clairmont regularly. And we keep adding extra gear, short-term, as needed. There’s always equipment going back, new equipment going



Devon Clark has been a Production Coordinator since 1986, working on Jaws—The Revenge, Baywatch, A Day In The Life, Northern Exposure, Airwolf and numerous commercials.

out for next day. We also switch cameras and lenses from 2nd Unit to 1st Unit, and back.”

## On top of it

“The packages get mixed up, so the paperwork can get confusing. But there’s never a problem, because the Operations people at Clairmont stay on top of it. Every day at 2PM they call me. Almost like clock-work. I don’t need to follow up, because *they* do.”

“And they’re *nice* about it. It’s a pleasure to hear from them because of their efficiency *and* their friendly attitude. I’m always confident the records are straight on their end. There’s never a doubt.”

## Surprises

“With some other places, you return everything at the wrap. Ten days later, you get a phone call—there’s four thousand Dollars worth of stuff missing. That has never happened to me at Clairmont. One of my jobs is to try to save a buck for the production company. When those other places tell me the loss total or the damage total, I’m skeptical.”

## Integrity

“But when Alan Albert calls from Clairmont to tell me what the damage repair costs are, I know that’s what they are,” says Mr. Clark. “It’s like buying film from Kodak—you don’t question it.”

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Henry Bromell, co-executive producer of *Homicide*, explains the genesis of the show's unusual look, recalling, "When [executive producer] Barry Levinson sat down to design the first episode, he felt that a problem with TV was that it looked terrible from a filmmaker's point of view. There are only seven or eight days to make an hour and so you don't have time to light well. Barry decided to design a show around the simple and good idea that we're not trying to light beautifully all the time. Barry then decided to use 16mm because it would add to the rougher and grainier look."

Asked about de Segonzac's desire to keep the look closer to traditional 35mm quality despite the show's documentary feel, Bromell says, "We often get into discussions about when to make something look beautiful or not beautiful. The show really doesn't look all that gritty a lot of the time."

According to Russ Suniewick of Colorlab in Rockville, Maryland, where *Homicide*'s film is processed and transferred to video, "It is easy to make 16mm look like 35mm if the time and money is spent on art direction and lighting and if special care is paid during the transfer process." Colorlab has two Rank Cintel Mark III's, which have "lots of proprietary bells and whistles to increase picture quality and elegance." Suniewick would not be more specific about his transfer process, except to say that a "very careful watch on the output" is maintained by chief engineer Charlie Brewer. Colorlab processes *Homicide*'s 7293 stock to straight Kodak specifications.

Zeiss Superspeed prime lenses were used extensively on *Homicide* prior to the current season, not to increase image sharpness but to gain extra stops without requiring extra lighting. "We have twice as much lighting gear this year, and so we were able to use the Cooke zoom on everything but night exteriors," de Segonzac says. Perhaps compensating for a switch from primes to zooms this year will be the fact that the 7293 will not be pushed to ISO 400 as it was prior to this season (due to the lower light levels dictated by budgetary constraints). De Segonzac says that

while the push processing did not degrade the picture quality in any noticeable way, he is glad to be able to shoot the stock at its assigned speed.

Shooting in 16mm enables the show to use an extremely fluid camera style that sets it apart from most TV fare. De Segonzac worked mostly in documentaries and independent features prior to working on *Homicide*. He thinks of the *Homicide* camera style as a blend of documentary and mainstream feature camera techniques.

While de Segonzac came from the rough-and-tumble world of documentaries, he aims for the "smoothest, sweetest" look possible, considering that the show is primarily handheld. "Along with my peers in the documentary world, I was always trying to create the smoothest look possible — like a Steadicam, only handheld. We always brought in as much lighting as possible and looked for unusual camera angles. 'Documentary style' does not mean everything at eye-level and shaky," he says. In one approach to facilitate *Homicide*'s low-angle handheld shots, de Segonzac has developed a "butt-dolly," a seat with skateboard wheels rolling on tubular dolly track.

"The camera is basically another character in the story," says co-executive producer Bromell. De Segonzac agrees that *Homicide*'s photographic approach is highly subjective, but has purposefully toned down what he saw as the overly-literal interpretation of the camera-as-character idea that existed prior to his taking the helm. He says the camera "no longer stays in the back seat of the car once the people in the front seat have gotten out of the car." Additionally, the show now has a more natural (though still toned-down) color palette, as opposed to the first season, during which most of the color was drained out in post.

To de Segonzac, "documentary style" means that he is freed from the master/medium shot/close-up structure. In fact, he stands that tradition on its head. "We always shoot the master last, because as we work our way through the various takes, most of which are done with significant



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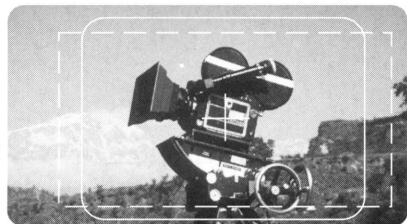


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camera movement variations, the actors find their way and the camera team does as well. So by the time we've done the scene a few times, we know what the master should be," he explains.

*Homicide*'s main set is the police squad room, which was built on a city-owned pier in Baltimore's Fells Point area. The mostly hard-ceilinged set is permanently top-lit, with 4x4 foot diffusion panels mounted in the ceiling to look like fluorescent light fixtures. Each panel has four 1,000-watt lights (prior to the '95-'96 season each panel had only 2,000 watts). Scenes are then lit individually when needed. "We try to light for all the camera and talent movement, but that is not always possible, so we sometimes end up with a general lighting," de Segonzac says. "We use a lot of dimmers so that as I move we can compensate and the light can be changed."

One problem de Segonzac faces is lighting actor Yaphet Kotto, who plays shift commander Al Giardello. "Yaphet has an extremely dark complexion. We originally tried lighting him very carefully each time we shot him, but it took too much time. So for his office we went to two big permanent overhead boxes and a bounce card, or a fluorescent bank for fill. When he's in a scene with a lighter-skinned actor, we often follow Yaphet with a round paper Japanese lantern with a 150-watt bulb on a boom, with a dimmer at the end. He has to have something like that or you just can't shoot him; there's nothing there. The lantern is a very forgiving soft light and the gaffer walks it so that it's kept to one side of his face and the shadow doesn't move. We'll also use it on everyone for night shots, which are often back lit. The Japanese lantern lets us take full advantage of the hand-held 16mm camera to do long, complicated moving night shots with relative ease and reduced lighting costs."

The economy of the Super 16mm format also allows the flexibility to shoot a rehearsal. "There's nothing to stop us; if we have a particularly emotional scene where say, someone is crying, we'll shoot it. Our lighting is up, our boom man is great, and we do it."



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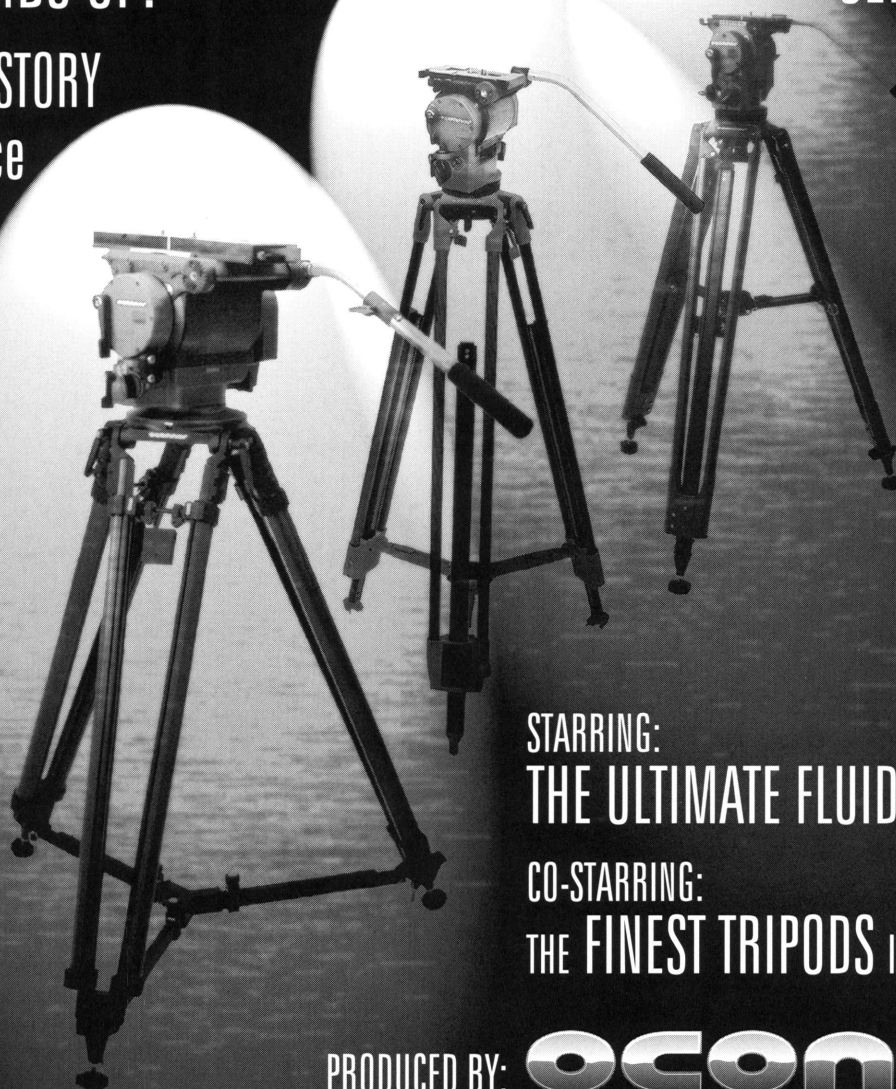
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**"F**OOTBALL IS LIFE. EVERYTHING else is just details."

The words are spoken with the clarity and conviction of a True Believer — a tag that NFL Films president Steve Sabol clearly would not refute.

On holy football Sundays for the past 30 years, Sabol and his father, Ed, the founder of NFL Films, have presided over an ever-expanding cottage industry of pig-skin mythmaking. Nearly every savage sack, soft spiral and circus catch — seen everywhere from freezing Foxboro Stadium in Massachusetts to the climate-controlled confines of the Seattle Kingdome — has been dutifully framed for posterity by NFL Films' sideline historians.

In an avarice-soaked era when gloomy business bywords like "collective bargaining" and "lockout clause" have somehow infiltrated the once-therapeutic sports page, Sabol's unadulterated affection for his favorite sport is downright refreshing.

Although Sabol played football himself from fourth grade all the way through his years as an All-Rocky Mountain running back at Colorado College, his rationale for his life's work points more toward his training as an art major than to any sentimental feelings toward his own gridiron glory days.

When asked why he considers football more photographically worthy than, say, baseball or basketball, Sabol replies, "It's the fierce, physical nature of the sport — the collisions. I think football is the most visceral of all the team sports. And the shape of a football field is basically the same shape as a movie screen. It has the color and the pageantry, the uniforms and the passage of the seasons, and the crowd is so much a part of the game. There's no other sport that can draw 70,000 people to every game. You show a baseball game, and three-quarters of the stands are empty. Basketball is all armpits, so it just doesn't have the same feeling that football does."

After producing more than 3,000 television shows and collecting 58 Emmys during its 30-year history, NFL Films is now housed in a huge Mt. Laurel, N.J.

facility that includes a state-of-the-art postproduction wing and a high-security film archive containing 40,000 cans that protect 16.4 million feet of football footage. The multi-million-dollar enterprise has come a long way from its humble, precarious origins: Ed Sabol's fledgling company Blair Motion

Pictures was started in 1962 in a room above a Chinese laundry in Philadelphia. The elder Sabol's photographic experience consisted of years spent filming Steve's high school and college football games with a 16mm Bell and Howell movie camera he had received as a wedding gift in 1941. Fed up with

## On Touchdowns, There Are No Second Takes

For 30 years, NFL Films has captured the spirit of professional football with mythical, man-to-man coverage that exalts the gridiron's weekly warriors.

by Chris Pizzello



*New England Patriots quarterback Drew Bledsoe, one of the NFL's hottest young stars, fades back to pass. To track the movements of quarterbacks and their passes, NFL Films cameraman Hank McElwee uses a special binocular system attached to his camera.*

Photos by Paul Spinelli, courtesy of NFL Films



his day job as an overcoat salesman, Sabol bid \$3,000 to shoot the 1962 NFL Championship game between the New York Giants and the Green Bay Packers. After winning the rights, Sabol took to the Yankee Stadium sidelines himself to direct the camera and shoot live sound.

By 1964, Sabol had six cameramen in his employ, but the National Football League was fast becoming big business. Fearing that his small company would be swallowed up by the conglomerates, Sabol convinced NFL commissioner Pete Rozelle to buy Blair Motion Pictures, with each of the 14 teams then in the league putting up \$20,000. The company was then re-christened NFL Films.

In 1965, NFL Films created its groundbreaking first feature, "They Call it Pro Football." Scripted by Steve Sabol, who had recently graduated from college, and narrated in the booming baritone of soon-to-be-legendary Philadelphia newscaster John Facenda, the first words spoken were, "It starts with a whistle and ends with a gun." NFL Films was on its way.

The dramatic, super-slow-motion images — captured from ground level — and the rich texture inherent in 16mm film were revolutionary at a time when the stolid, bird's-eye video images of the television networks formed the public's impressions of the sport. Steve Sabol found himself going back to his art studies to re-conceptualize a sport whose behemoth-like combatants and testosterone-fueled violence had never even vaguely been thought of in aesthetic terms.

"I went back to a lot of the great Renaissance painters who used a technique called *chiaroscuro*, which is a way of using light to heighten certain dramatic effects," Sabol explains. "There was an 18th Century painter named Di Churico who painted the old Roman Coliseum and other architecture, and the way he used to frame his subjects influenced how I shot stadiums.

"The French impressionistic painter Paul Cezanne said that all art is selected detail. I felt that was something that I could do well as a cameraman — shooting not

necessarily the action but the details: the cleat marks, the mud, the way the sun comes through the portals of a stadium, flags blowing against the sky. One of my favorite moviemakers was Leni Riefenstahl, who shot the 1936 Olympic film. She used the sky in a way that increased the grandeur and the epic sense of the competition. So I had a lot of our cameramen shooting from lower angles to get parts of the sky and the clouds



into the frame. It just gave the sport a more epic, mythic feeling."

Since Sabol's stated goal was to portray football the way Hollywood portrayed fiction, he also found himself being inspired by the larger-than-life images of the big screen. "The ending of *Duel in the Sun*, with Gregory Peck and Jennifer Jones climbing up a mountain, really influenced me," Sabol asserts. "[I liked] the way it was done, with the details of just their fingers digging into the rock and the sweat coming down Gregory Peck's face; I thought it would be interesting to film football that way, using a telephoto lens to show the grit and the striving and the lineplay, the same way that this film showed the actors crawling up this mountain through details."

By the same token, NFL Films' distinctive style would eventually be emulated by one of the supreme mavens of film mayhem in the 1960s. "[Director] Sam Peckinpah actually got a lot of things from us," beams Sabol. "Ap-

parently, in an old issue of *Cahiers du Cinema*, he wrote that before he made *The Wild Bunch* he saw one of our films, and it had a big influence on him!" For confirmation, one need only study that classic film's balletic violence and plentiful slow-motion gunplay.

To the layman who has never handled a 600mm lens carrying mere inches of depth of field, it is impossible to describe the difficulty of maintaining perfect focus on a halfback with 4.3-second speed in the 40-yard dash. How is it done? "Practice, practice, practice," veteran NFL Films cameraman Hank McElwee says simply. "And if you lose focus, turn the camera off! When you're shooting slow-motion at 150 frames per second, that film goes through the camera fast."

McElwee is an NFL Films "lifer," having worked for the company for 27 years running. His first job was stacking film that had just come out of the processing machine, a position he held for two years before transferring into the camera department. Once there, he spent years assisting a trio of NFL Films cameramen, each of whom gave McElwee different insights into what it takes to be a "ground man" — that somewhat mythical NFL Films figure who takes to the sidelines each week in search of the elusive "glory shots" that will burrow their way into football fans' subconscious minds for a lifetime.

"From Steve Sabol, I learned how to make a frame of film tell a story," McElwee recounts. "He would say, 'You don't just shoot the thing in the center of the frame, you've gotta look all around the sides. It's like drawing a painting.' From [cameraman] Howard Neef, I learned professionalism; Howard gets behind the camera and he's like a mechanic. And from Ernie Ernst, I learned how to have a good time."

Ernst was the only photographer to capture Franco Harris' legendary "Immaculate Reception" in a 1972 AFC playoff game between the Pittsburgh Steelers and the Oakland Raiders, one of NFL Films' most indelible moments. "A lot of times when you're looking through the eyepiece of the camera, something will flash through the frame," McElwee describes. "Ernie

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**Left: Armed and ready to shoot, producer/cinematographer Phil Tuckett frames Pittsburgh's Three Rivers Stadium with NFL Films President Steve Sabol. Sabol says that his company's visual approach to stadiums is based on 18th-Century canvases depicting the Roman Coliseum.**



**Below: Cinematographer Phil Tuckett, an award-winning veteran of NFL Films, takes aim from the sidelines.**

was following the play, and Franco flashed in the background. For some reason, Ernie just rack-focused on Franco and there was the ball. Everybody missed the shot, including the networks.

"And by the way, Franco *did* trap the ball," McElwee reveals

with a wry laugh. "In the shot, Franco is cut off at the knees. But Ernie says he trapped it."

After sufficient seasoning, McElwee became a ground man himself 12 years ago, and has developed his own *modus operandi*. "I shoot a 150-600mm Century Precision zoom lens, and I'm in the end zone on a tripod," he says. "I'm the guy who gets those tight spiral shots, where the ball is flying through the air and then lands in the receiver's arms. All I do is focus. If you can't focus, you're dead."

The obvious drawback to using a lens with such a narrow perspective is the inability to sense what's going on outside the frame. But McElwee gets around the limitation with a resourceful use of both eyes. "While my right eye is looking through the eyepiece of the camera, my left one is looking through a binocular system on the side!" he explains. "The image I see through my left eye is wider and brighter. I can use both of my eyes to see each image, which allows me to go and find things like fumbles. When I'm using the binocular sys-

tem, I'll stay on the quarterback until he throws the ball, and because I'm trained to use both eyes, I'll then be able to track his pass. That's the only way in the world to shoot football."

Since football games aren't postponed or canceled when weather takes a cruel turn, one would think rain or snow would be the bane of an NFL Films cameraman's existence. Just the opposite is true, according to McElwee. "If it's snowing or raining, I like to get to the stadium a little earlier," he maintains. "That's when you can get those good taking-off-the-tarp shots, the good weather shots. You die for snow! If it's snowing, that's what the job's all about."

Although McElwee is careful to cover all his equipment with rain covers in inclement weather, not even that precaution can solve the irritating problem of eyepiece fog. With the help of NFL Films director of engineering development Dick Defrenes, McElwee devised an idiosyncratic but ingenious solution eight years ago. "I got together with Dick one day, and I said, 'What if we put a little tube off the eyepiece of the camera, run it to our mouths, and blow in it?'" he recalls. "So we built this tube, put it on the camera and took it from the warm inside to the



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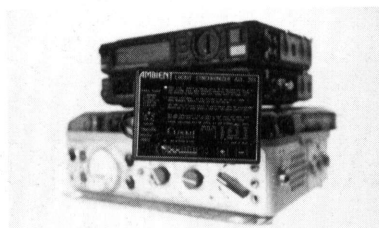
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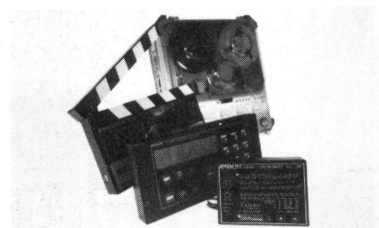
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**NFL Films' vice president of cinematography Steve Andrich (in white shirt) poses with members of a film crew while shooting football footage for the comedic feature film Naked Gun 3 1/3.**

the old days it was just mucky and grainy. The difference between reversal and negative is night and day."

Under the best sunny, mid-

afternoon conditions, McElwee says NFL Films will normally shoot with Kodak's 50 ASA 7245 film. For late afternoon games when the sun begins to sink behind the stands, the shooters go to the 200 ASA 7297, while Monday night games call for the fast 500 ASA 7298.

McElwee lets out an audible groan when asked how he handles the exposure on quirky fields like Texas Stadium, home of the Dallas Cowboys, where the half-domed edifice floods part of the field in harsh, contrasty sunshine and the rest in deep shade. "It's death," he moans. "We just ride the aperture. On my lens, I've taken a bar and attached it to the diaphragm that opens or closes the aperture on the lens. The bar that comes off that goes up to my left hand where I focus. It's right at my thumb so I can pop it up or pop it down to open or close the diaphragm. About an inch gives you two stops of exposure either way. In the old reversal days, we would have been dead. But with the negative, we have a little bit of latitude. My rig is crazy, but it works."

Although total mastery of one's equipment is essential in order to be an NFL Films cameraman, certain personality traits are equally imperative. Thick skin and craftiness helped McElwee pave the way for his NFL Films colleagues during the San Francisco 49ers' first Super Bowl run.

"Before I started shooting with a long lens, I used to go out and shoot handheld," McElwee recalls. "I was doing a piece for CBS one day on [49ers head coach] Bill Walsh, before their first Super Bowl, and he called the team together at the end of a practice. This producer told me to go on the field and get what he was saying to the team. I told him, 'I don't think that's a good idea.' He said, 'No, you've got permission.

cold outside, so that it would fog up. I blew on the tube and it didn't work. Then I said to myself, 'What if I suck on it?' So I did that, and guess what? It took all the moisture off the eyepiece. Now most of our cameras have that tube attached. It's a lifesaver, especially with the Arriflex SR-3 cameras we use, because your eye is so close to the piece of glass on the eyepiece. Sometimes I'll look over at all of these TV cameramen during rainy games, and their equipment is soaking wet. I'll think, 'What's with these guys? Get a rag and clean it up!' Once everything gets wet, you're dead. Whereas I'll be shooting with that tube in my mouth, and I'll be sucking all day long!"

McElwee also notes that the huge technical leaps made in equipment and film have had a hand in NFL Films' unique look. "The most important things are the advances with the lenses," he states. "You could take an old Arri N camera, put a good piece of glass on it, and you're still going to get pretty pictures. When I started out, lenses were, speedwise, probably 2.8 or 3.5. Now we have T2s, T1.3s. Anytime you get a stop of light, it helps.

"We used to shoot old reversal film, which had no latitude whatsoever," he adds. "Now we're shooting the negative stocks, where you have all the latitude in the world, and they're just the most beautiful T-grain stocks. On a sunny afternoon, the color saturation just jumps at you, whereas in



Everything's OK, you go ahead.' Very reluctantly, I headed onto the field, where Walsh was telling the players how to handle the press during the playoffs. He saw me and just went through the roof, yelling and swearing. He told [49ers public relations man] Jerry Walker, 'I not only want him off the field, I want him OUT OF HERE!' They threw me out of the complex and out of the parking lot!

"From that point on, I became the NFL Films decoy," McElwee says, laughing. "Wherever I was at every 49ers game, the public relations man would follow me around and throw me off the field. So at the Super Bowls, I would walk around while he was following me, and in the meantime, everybody else could dart in and get their shots of Jerry Rice and Joe Montana!"

In an ironic twist of fate, McElwee ended up getting the last laugh on Walsh, his one-time nemesis. "After his last Super Bowl victory, I was in the locker room and I saw [CBS announcer] Brent Musburger grab Walsh for an interview," he recalls. "I said to myself, 'What the hell, I'll go see what's going on.' Musburger was interviewing him for CBS Radio, and I was the only cameraman there.

"What I got was the shot where Walsh finally breaks down and starts crying! After all the stuff Walsh did to me, I consider that one of my best shots ever. Now if he ever sees me in the elevator, he'll say, 'Hey, how ya doing?' But if he comes back to coaching, he'll do the same thing: order me off the field!"

If Hank McElwee is the dogged foot soldier of NFL Films, producer and cameraman Phil Tuckett is the organization's revolutionary theoretician. In his 26 years at NFL Films, Tuckett has become so good at what he does that he now operates in his own private sphere of sports cinematography.

Secure in the knowledge that NFL Films always employs a "top man" responsible for shooting every play of a game from a more reliable overhead position in the stands, Tuckett approaches foot-



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ball from an almost abstract viewpoint. Rather than staying rooted to one shooting position, Tuckett prefers to roam the sidelines handholding his 150-600mm lens, letting the elongated slow-motion format camouflage any camera shake.

"If I can get a shot of a player's eyeball and nostril, and there's something interesting about it, I couldn't care less about where the ball goes or what happens to it," he says. "I'm working the minutiae angle of the fingernails in the dirt, flying turf and sweat dripping off the players' faces. It's almost like I've entered into a different realm than the game itself. I've gone inside that. My approach now is to let it all hang out."

As a one-time NFL receiver who spent a season with the San Diego Chargers, Tuckett has a deep understanding of the game that imbues his photographic approach. "If you balance the skill with the camera versus the knowledge of football, I would prefer starting the way I did, with the knowledge of the game and then learning photography," he says. "I became much better than I ever thought I would be, almost immediately, because the cameras and lenses were great. I seemed to have a good feeling for the zoom almost right off the bat, seeing more, seeing less, getting tighter, getting wider. That part seemed to come pretty naturally."

What didn't come naturally was being on, rather than between, the sidelines. "I had always been on the athlete's side of the lens," Tuckett explains. "Even though I wasn't a star in the NFL, I had always been the subject of photographs being taken, not the guy taking them. There was an invisible barrier there. But as soon as I started shooting, that feeling went away immediately, and soon I was groveling at people's feet, lying on my stomach and rolled over on my back in all sorts of ridiculous poses. I didn't give it another thought, because I was just going for the shot."

Tuckett was further awakened to his new calling when, during the first game he ever shot from the sidelines, the twin images of Haven Moses and Kermit

Alexander suddenly loomed uncomfortably large in his viewfinder. "I was following a pass and I made a pretty good move downfield," he recalls. "Then all of a sudden, the wide receiver and the defensive back are running right over the top of me. They gave me a nice scar to the tune of 18 stitches between my eyes. Knocked me flat on my back. But I must have learned my lesson, because 25 years later I haven't been touched since."

A Stanley Kubrick acolyte who also writes narration and edits footage for NFL Films, Tuckett has learned to block out the clamor of the sidelines and take a cerebral, chess-like approach to the job. "I once wrote a script for a film on the space program that Orson Welles narrated," he recalls. "He came in without ever having seen the script and read it all the way through without one mistake. I asked him how he could possibly do that, and he said that while he was reading one line, he was scanning ahead to see if there were any problems with the copy that was coming up. That sounds like it's impossible, but I think I do that same kind of thing when I shoot a game. I'm thinking, 'What's going to happen in two or three plays if such-and-such takes place? That way I'm in position before anyone else knows it's the right position to be in.'"

Since Tuckett likes to be mobile with the 150-600mm lens, he has a special camera rig that allows him to handhold the bazooka-like contraption. "I've never had any back problems," he reports with a hint of surprise. "I have a shoulder brace that was specially customized for me by Dick Defrenes. I use a pistol grip attached to a metal brace, which has a rotating shoulder rest. By moving the camera along that metal brace and finding the perfect spot where the camera is counterbalancing this lens that's sticking so far out front, I've been able to pretty successfully shoot whole games without being whipped like a dog."

Tuckett stresses smart positioning as the reason why one shooter will consistently bring back the visual goods, while others are forever whining about being blocked by a referee or ball boy. He credits this subtle skill as the secret



to one of his greatest shots, which would come to be known as "The Miracle of the Meadowslands."

During a game in the late Seventies, the New York Giants led the Philadelphia Eagles by a few points with time in regulation running out. To seal the victory, the Giants needed only to sit on the ball and let the clock expire. As the Eagles called their last time out, Tuckett took note of the throngs of complacent photographers convinced of the Giants' impending win. He then took a leisurely stroll to the endzone behind the Giants. "It just crossed my mind that I would be in perfect position if something unbelievable happened and the Eagles got the ball," he explains. "There wasn't anyone within 20 yards of me on either side."

Instead of simply taking a prudent kneeldown after play resumed, Giants quarterback Joe Pisarcik inexplicably turned to hand the ball off to Larry Czonka, and in a heartbeat the unthinkable had come horrifyingly true. "I just couldn't believe it when the ball popped right into [Eagles safety] Herman Edwards' hands," says a still incredulous Tuckett. "He could have run anywhere, into the other corner or across the field. I just think that I was the only person at that end of the field, so he literally ran right into my lens! He then proceeded to just stand there, and his whole team ran out and were jumping right over me to get to him! It was a freaky occurrence, because nobody could believe the play was covered from that angle."

On another occasion, Tuckett's enterprising style resulted in a key change in how football would be presented on network television. "I've always shot on both sides of the field," he explains. "When I first started shooting I would get criticized, because doing that supposedly breaks the plane of action. If an edit is made from the top camera to your camera, the player with the ball would be running two different ways. Well, I'm an editor myself, and I knew that in the montage editing that we do, nobody ever used match cuts like that. So I would listen politely, say, 'Oh yes, I under-

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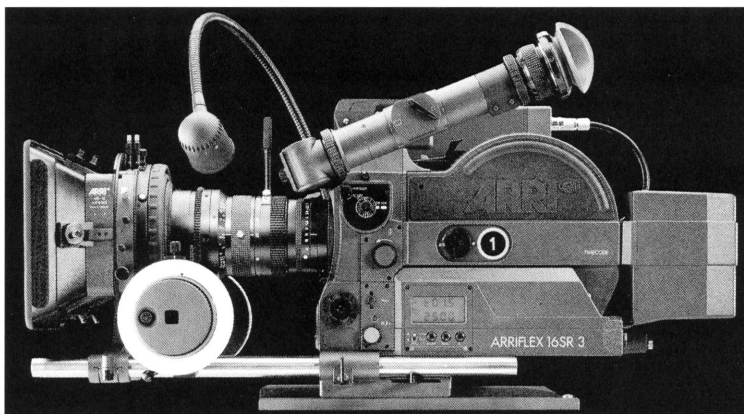
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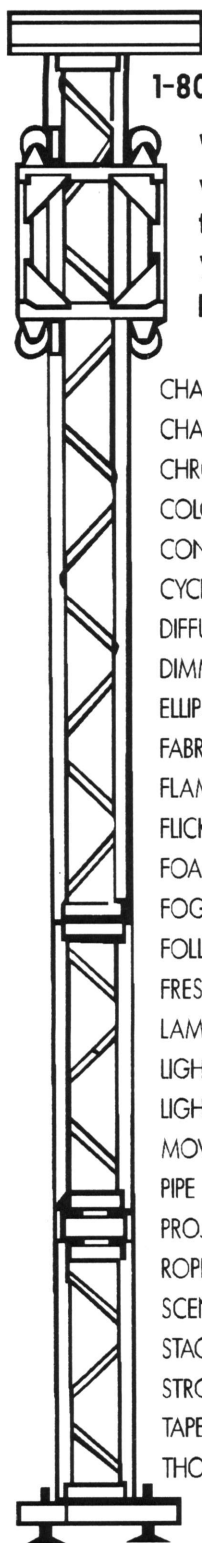
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stand,' and then go on the other side of the field again."

During an AFC Championship game in Pittsburgh in the late Seventies, Tuckett found himself in the rather advantageous position of having played for one of the coaches, the Oilers' Bum Phillips, back when Phillips was an assistant coach with the Chargers. "I just knew he was going to try this one particular fade route, where [quarterback] Dan Pastorini would loft the ball into the corner of the endzone for [receiver] Mike Renfro," Tuckett recalls. "So I positioned myself on the other side of the field, in that corner. Sure enough the play was called, and I was in exactly the right position to show that Renfro juggled the ball and didn't have possession.

"NBC had 12, 14 cameras there, and each one of them was inconclusive, because Renfro's back was to the main camera side. What the Oilers and the networks thought was that the referee had called that Renfro hadn't kept his feet inbounds. The NBC announcers ripped into the officials because of the horrible call they had made — his feet were obviously inbounds. It wasn't until the league got my shot and spread it around that people saw that the referees were right [to call no catch] because Renfro had juggled the ball. The next season, all of the networks had sideline cameras on the other side of the field! The networks' in-house lingo for it was the 'Renfro Angle.'"

NFL Films cameramen are allowed an enviable amount of creative independence, perhaps due to the fact that their boss spent 15 years as a ground man himself. "When I was a cameraman, I didn't want anyone talking to me," says Steve Sabol. "Each one of our cameramen is a director and an artist in his own right. They each have their own distinct style. I give a speech before the Super Bowl, and I say what Teddy Roosevelt told the Rough Riders before they stormed San Juan Hill. He said, 'Do what you can with what you have where you are.' Then they're on their own."

To encourage the artistic daring that is at the core of all great photography, Sabol gives out a

\$1000 reward each year to the cameraman responsible for the most spectacular failure of the season. "In our business, once you stop taking risks, you stop growing," he says simply. "It's very important to me that everybody here, from the cameramen to the editors, take risks, because otherwise you become stagnant. Besides, our ground cameraman has always got the top man backing him up."

And if the man upstairs misses? "Boy, that's a disaster," Sabol states in a grave tone that implies he's seen the catastrophe before. "If something important happens, and that top man misses it, history has gone by the wayside. It's the worst thing that can happen."

Over the years, NFL Films has been criticized for not showing the game's darker side — the seamy business side of the sport, for example, or allegations of steroid abuse. A romanticist at heart, Sabol isn't bothered by the charge. "I'm just not interested [in those issues]," he admits unapologetically. "Even if I wasn't part of the league, I wouldn't make films like that. They say that films are a reflection of the producer's feelings or perspective, and I love football. If you were a king and you wanted a painting called 'The Horrors of War,' you would hire Goya and he would paint these horrible, dismembered people.

"But if you wanted a beautiful painting of your knights, you might go to Rembrandt. So it's all in your vision of what the game is. I think I speak for the millions of football fans. What they like about the game is the competition, the collisions and the courage and guts it takes to play football. These are the eternal recurring themes of NFL Films."

The organization's alliance with the league is also what allows NFL Films fleeting tastes of unprecedented access, such as filming inside locker rooms or wiring players and coaches for live sound during games. However, even with the assurance that anything controversial from the wires will be edited out, some coaches have been known to turn on a dime in the heat of battle.



McElwee recalls planting a wireless microphone on Dallas Cowboys safety Bill Bates for an NFL Films feature story a few years ago. "I was shooting Bates during the first half and he was running around like a madman," McElwee recalls. "He was great. But [then-head coach] Jimmy Johnson went into the locker room at halftime and said, 'What the hell's with Bates?' His assistant coach told him he was wearing our microphone. Johnson said, 'What do you mean he's got a microphone on? Tell him to take the [expletive] thing off!'"

Although Johnson had previously approved the wiring, Bates was told to take the microphone off, forcing McElwee and a soundman to record what they could with a handheld "shotgun mike" for the rest of the game.

"At the end of the second half, my soundman and I walked over to the sideline, and I started shooting footage of Bates," McElwee says. "Jimmy Johnson saw me, walked over, got right in my face and said, 'Will you please allow my football team to play this football game?' I just said, 'Sure, coach. No problem.' I couldn't believe I was actually going to have a direct result on how this football team was going to play that day! But those sorts of things happen all the time."

Fortunately, no such friction occurred during NFL Films' latest and most ambitious project, made for the NFL Hall of Fame's new theater in Canton, Ohio, which is scheduled to open in October. During the first part of the presentation, audiences will be placed inside two pre-game locker rooms — those of the Pittsburgh Steelers and the Kansas City Chiefs — shot last year in the high-definition video format, marking the first time coaches have allowed NFL Films to be in on the entire pre-game process. Tuckett notes that only Joe Montana of the Chiefs had a problem with the arrangement — perhaps a telling indicator of the quarterback's legendary focus and concentration.

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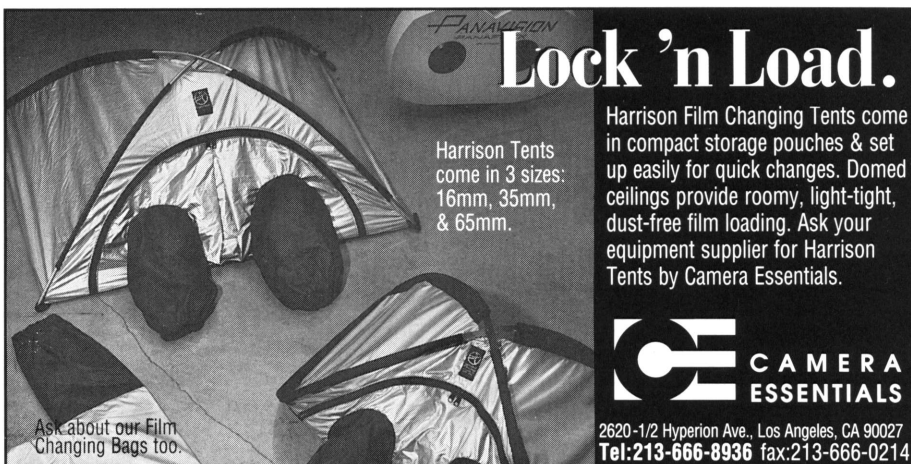
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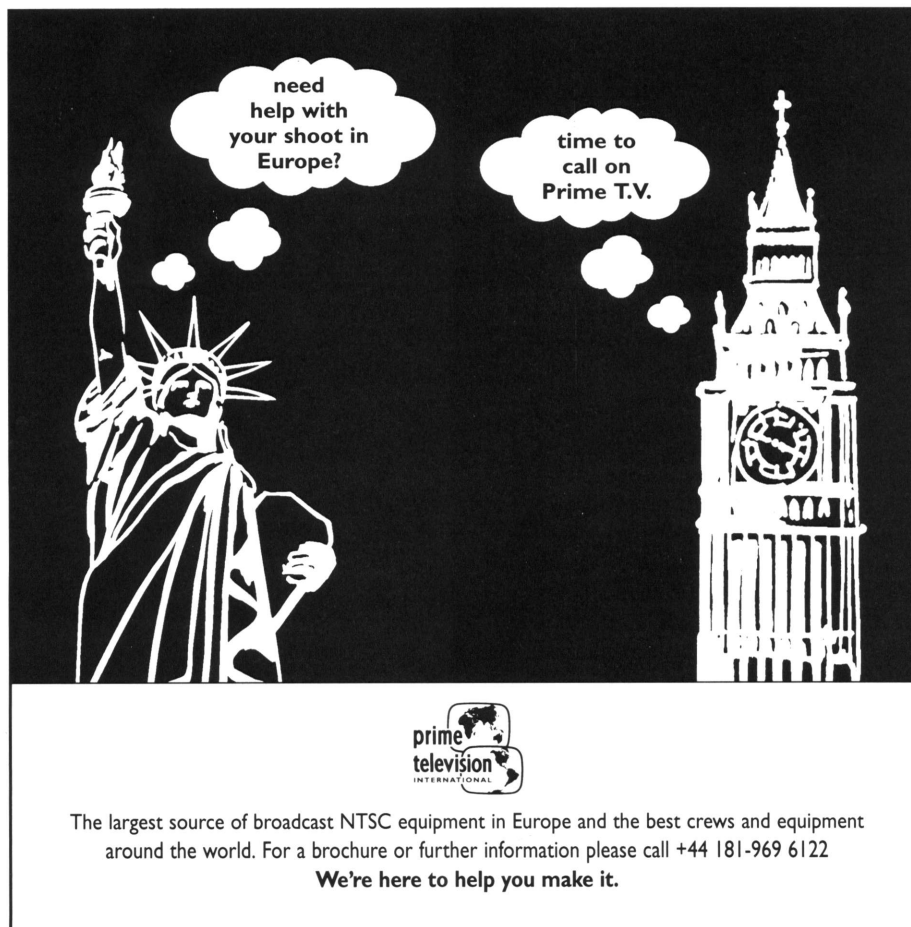
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players' actual pre-game dialogue as they travel through the tunnel to the playing field. When the audience is locked into place, they will see a two-story tall presentation of *The 100 Yard Universe*, a 12-minute live-action presentation shot in 35mm anamorphic Cinemascope.

For the latter segment, NFL Films cameramen took turns last season shooting games with a Cinemascope Panavision 70 camera, which weighed 85 pounds. "It was a big beast, and there was some question as to whether we could adapt our 16mm style to the Pana-style with anamorphic lenses," says Tuckett, who produced the Hall of Fame project. "I think we were definitely able to do that. The game of football is meant for an anamorphic lens, because it's a lateral game spread out along the line of scrimmage. Every frame we looked at was more interesting than the squared-off 16mm that's really cutting off the two ends your peripheral vision can conceive. And when you blow up the anamorphic footage on a 40-foot-high screen, it becomes quite a visceral experience."

Another forthcoming Tuckett-produced project is *Six Days to Sunday*, a prime-time documentary special shot in super 16mm, in which NFL Films cameramen followed the Dallas Cowboys through an entire week of game preparations, starting with the end of one game and running up until the start of their Sept. 17th game this season against the Minnesota Vikings. The program is scheduled to be aired on the TNT network in October.

NFL Films even recently started its own "draft" of sorts by inviting several video cameramen of promise to its own training program this past August. "Ten years ago there were still guys who were being trained and brought up on film," says new vice president of cinematography Steve Andrich, who is in charge of acquiring new talent for NFL Films. "Now there are guys with very good eyes who have a great feel for the game, but they can only shoot video. They haven't had to deal with changing mags or the flicker of the shutter. In film, you can't just hit the auto-iris



button to get your exposure. So you really have to understand the tenets of photography a bit more than if you're just picking up a video camera."

Andrich adds that the job is made more difficult by the immediacy of the sport. "When you're shooting football, there's no script, and you can't rehearse the moves. You can't run out on the field after a touchdown and say to the players, 'I didn't get it quite right.' They're not going to run it again!"

After 30 years, Steve Sabol says he still gets the same fulfillment out of sitting alone in an editing room and shaping the NFL Films' trademark blend of balletic combat and stirring orchestral music. "I remember from my art history classes that Rodin was one of my favorite sculptors," he says. "He always said that his work didn't convey any ideas, just emotions. Sometimes I think that's what we do. Football is too visceral a sport to be intellectualized. Sometimes there's too much of this talk about X's and O's; really, it's just a primal combat between two teams."

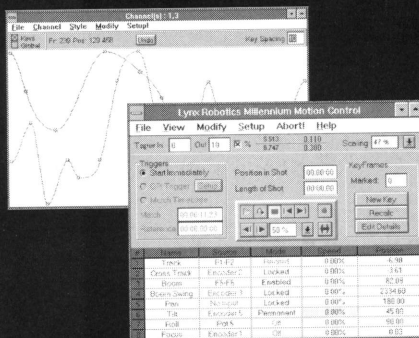
Asked to name the quintessential NFL Films moment, Sabol is reflective for a moment, but then makes an apt choice that points to a simpler, purer era in professional sports. "It might be our film of the 'Ice Bowl,' the 1967 NFL Championship Game between the Dallas Cowboys and the Green Bay Packers," the filmmaker reflects. "We had such good photography in those 16-below-zero conditions. Plus, that game was the ultimate test of manhood, or the limits to which two teams can push themselves. I always thought that was the greatest game in NFL history."

With a wistful tone, Sabol concludes, "I still get goosebumps when I hear John Facenda's voice intoning, 'In the ice-bucket chill of a Wisconsin winter, the two best teams in the National Football League met in a cruel rite of manhood. . .'"

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# Don't Touch That Dial

The Emmy Awards offer annual accolades for the finest in television cinematography.

by Chris Probst and Marji Rhea

THE REBIRTH OF VISUALLY INTERESTING PROGRAMMING FOR TELEVISION IS EVIDENT in this year's Emmy-nominated offerings, which hint at a renaissance for diverse and gripping material. Battling the adverse conditions that traditionally come with the television terrain, 11 uncompromising directors of photography have risen above the ash, sweat and tears with work that is dramatic, inspirational and above all, cinematic.

In the following pages, 1995's Emmy nominees shed light on their individual triumphs over the eternal nemesis of cinematographers working within television: the perpetual tick of the clock.

## CINEMATOGRAPHY FOR A SERIES

**John S. Bartley, CSC**  
*The X-Files*, "One Breath"

John S. Bartley's Emmy nomination follows his 1994 ASC Award nomination for the *X-Files* episode "Duane Barry." Bartley, who grew up in New Zealand, left school at 15 to start working in theater and was immediately seduced by lighting. After moving to Toronto from New York because he couldn't get a U.S. work visa, Bartley wound up managing a rental house and freelancing as a gaffer for commercials. Leaving the rental business and moving into features, he worked as gaffer for Sven Nykvist, ASC, John Lindley, and Frank Tidy, BSC. His experience as a gaffer eventually evolved into director of photography work on music videos, commercials, and trailers. His first feature was the sci-fi film *Beyond the Stars*. He later photographed the series *Booker* and *The Commish*, as well as the pilots for *Outlaw* and *Both Sides of the Street*.

*The X-Files* is currently in its third season with Bartley behind the camera. This year, the series has been nominated for seven Emmys and also received the Golden Globe for Best Dramatic

Series. Asked about the state of the television medium, Bartley optimistically offers, "A couple of years ago a lot of people were saying that the one-hour television series was dead. . . but with a lot of the shows coming out now, that definitely isn't the case."

Commenting on the *X-Files*' 15-hour workdays, Bartley concedes, "It's not the easiest series around. It's a lot of work and it's very tough on the crew. Because we shoot in Vancouver, we have to keep an eye on the weather forecast. It can be pouring rain in the morning and sunny by lunch."

The nominated episode, "One Breath," is also noteworthy in that it marked the return of the show's female lead, Gillian Anderson, following the birth of the actress's daughter during the previous week — which mandated clever framing to hide the fictional character's sudden non-maternal state.

Reflecting upon the show's eerie subject matter and his photographic license in executing each week's foray into the macabre, Bartley says, "I'm very lucky to have producers who say, 'We want it dark, we want it moody.'"

**John C. Flinn III, ASC**  
*Babylon 5*  
"The Geometry of Shadow"

The third generation of his family to enter the business — his grandfather worked with Cecil B. DeMille and his father was a Columbia executive — Flinn started out in the early Sixties as an actor and stuntman on shows such as *Get Smart* and *Guns Smoke*. He moved behind the scenes in 1965, when he started working with cinematographer Freddy Jackson in the camera department, and continued working with such ASC veterans as William Fraker, the late Richard Rawlings, Sr., Ted Voigtlander, Robert Surtees and Monroe Askins, Jr. Since becoming a cameraman in 1979, he has worked exclusively in television, likening it to making a small movie once a week. Flinn earned two ASC nominations and a 1992 ASC Award for his work on *Jake and the Fatman*, the latter for an episode he also directed. That show also garnered

## EMMY NOMINATIONS FOR CINEMATOGRAPHY 1995

### SERIES

**John Bartley, CSC**

*The X-Files*, "One Breath"

**John C. Flinn III, ASC**

*Babylon 5*, "The Geometry of Shadow"

**Brian J. Reynolds**

*NYPD Blue*, "You Bet Your Life"

**Marvin V. Rush, ASC**

*Star Trek: Voyager*,  
"Heroes and Demons"

**Roland Ozzie Smith**

*Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman*,  
"A Washington Affair"

**Tim Suhrstedt\***

*Chicago Hope*, "Over the Rainbow"

### MINI-SERIES OR SPECIAL

**Chuck Arnold**

*Take Me Home Again*

**Thomas Del Ruth, ASC**

*My Brother's Keeper*

**Robert Primes, ASC\***

*My Antonia*

**Richard Rawlings, ASC**

*Big Dreams & Broken Hearts*:  
*The Dottie West Story*

**Michael Watkins, ASC**

*Danielle Steele's Family Album*

\*winner





An honorary gourmet dinner was held for the Emmy nominees at Kodak's facility in Hollywood, during which the company recognized each cinematographer with an award. And though Michael Watkins, ASC was unable to attend the festivities, Kodak's Paul Melnychuk brought him in the following day and performed some Macintosh/Photoshop wizardry on the customary group shot — taken with Kodak's DCS 420 digital still camera — to acknowledge that he was there in spirit. From left: Dr. James Loper, Academy executive director; Baseball's documentary cameraman Buddy Squires; Brian J. Reynolds; IATSE president George Dibie, ASC; Kodak regional manager John Mason; Roland Ozzie Smith; a synthetic Watkins; Robert Primes, ASC; Fred Franzwa, vice president of Kodak's Motion Picture Division; John Flynn C. III, ASC; Tim Suhrstedt; and Emmy magazine editor/publisher Hank Reiger.

him two Emmy nominations, and Flinn has also been recognized by the Television Academy for his prior work on *Magnum, P.I.* and the mini-series *The Operation*.

**Brian J. Reynolds**  
*NYPD Blue*  
"You Bet Your Life"

Reynolds' Emmy nod follows a 1994 ASC Award nomination for the same episode and a 1993 ASC nomination for the *NYPD Blue* episode "Oscar Meyer Wiener." Reynolds says he has "always wanted to be a cameraman." By the time he was eight, he was using a Brownie 8mm movie camera to make small films. A high school friend got him interested in still photography, and soon Reynolds was taking pictures for the school newspaper and yearbook. He also filmed movies of football games every Friday night and was allowed to take the school's 16mm Bolex camera home during the week, facilitating his filmmaking aspirations.

Reynolds earned an honorable mention in the Kodak Teenage Movie competition for a film which combined images with a Cat Stevens song, but narrative films were his specialty.

"*The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* was a big hit on TV," he says. "I saved enough money to purchase a Beaulieu Super 8mm camera and got some of my friends interested

in making short films. Different people would make up the scripts and play the parts, but I always shot and edited the film."

After graduation, Reynolds worked for several years as a still photographer for a small studio, taking pictures for catalogs. He was working in the camera department at a retail store when a friend told him that Mattel was looking for a photographer to shoot pictures of toys for their catalogs.

"I didn't have a portfolio, so I assigned myself to create one," he says, "and I got the job. I was working with terrific art directors at Mattel who taught me how to design images. I learned to ask myself where I wanted to direct the eyes of the audience when they looked at a picture."

Reynolds started shooting video storyboards to test concepts for TV commercials created by an ad agency, and after a while, the marketing people at Mattel asked Reynolds to shoot the spots himself. That led to an opportunity to shoot and edit a series of spots filmed around the world for Hansen's, a soft drink manufacturer.

Reynolds says that this experience began shaping his perspective in ways that paid big dividends when he started shooting TV series. "I learned that what really matters is your ability to put the money that the producer is in-

vesting on the screen," he says. "Shooting on locations on relatively small budgets forced me to think about developing a minimalist approach to lighting."

Reynolds filmed numerous commercials after that, including a spot for blue jeans with director Sidney Galanty which resulted in an opportunity to shoot the first Jane Fonda workout videos with Galanty. The videos got Reynolds into the International Photographers Guild, which opened the door for his first studio film, *The Danger Team*, a pilot for Lorimar Television featuring Claymation characters. The pilot didn't take root, but Reynolds' work caught the eye of director Robert Butler, who was making plans to produce *Sisters*, for which Reynolds ended up filming the first six episodes. Butler introduced him to Gregory Hoblit, who was getting ready to produce *Civil Wars* for Steven Bochco. Reynolds' work on the pilot episode won him an ASC nomination in 1992. He made his jump from episodic TV to theatrical features with *Guarding Tess*, a dramatic comedy starring Shirley MacLaine and Nicolas Cage.

**Marvin V. Rush, ASC**  
*Star Trek: Voyager*  
"Heroes and Demons"

Marvin Rush, ASC continues his successful association with the *Star Trek* shows with the latest



spin-off, *Star Trek: Voyager*. Just last year he was working on *Deep Space Nine* and collected an ASC nomination for the episode "Crossover."

Rush was first invited to shoot *Star Trek: The Next Generation* after producers Rick Berman and David Livingston saw his work on the visually striking but short-lived NBC sitcom *Frank's Place*. Rush was Emmy-nominated for his *Star Trek* work before moving on to *Deep Space Nine*. Prior to joining *Trek*, Rush also shot the series *Dear John*.

Rush, whose early career found him filming the Rose Parade every year, came to *Star Trek: The Next Generation* having never worked in the single-camera one-hour format, and having never seen the show. In fact, Rush had never even sat through a full episode of the classic original *Trek* series. The producers didn't consider this a drawback, figuring that Rush would be better able to create his own look for the new version. As it turned out, the realistic look of the show, with its seamless special effects, was in many ways responsible for making it appealing to non-Trekkers, who might have been less willing than fans of the first series to suspend their disbelief.

The *Star Trek* shows have brought to television their own mark of beautiful and complicated imagery, which is no small feat to achieve. As Rush shoots he has to consider the special effects, keeping prosthetic pieces from showing and working around opticals. "On a show like this," he has said of his work on *The Next Generation*, "time is the most precious commodity. It's also the enemy. I've got plenty of equipment, I've got plenty of personnel, I've got plenty of money being spent to get the job done, but the clock is always running. For that reason, you've always got to consider the relative importance of the scene at hand. Not that anything's a throwaway, but there are scenes where you just look at your watch and it tells you what to do."

Of course, he's not complaining. "*Star Trek* is very much a cameraman's show," he has maintained. Also keeping him enthusi-

astic about his job is the knowledge that die-hard, rabid fans — with whom he communicates on several *Star Trek* computer forums — are watching his work closely.

He will admit that the grueling schedules are difficult: "You have to be sensitive to the basic fact that people get tired. The most important thing for myself is to keep a really positive attitude, a real sense of excitement about the work and the commitment to artistry. I'm certainly not finished learning how to do this job."

**Roland Ozzie Smith**  
*Dr. Quinn,*  
*Medicine Woman*  
"A Washington Affair"

This Emmy nomination marks the second major recognition for "A Washington Affair," which recently earned an ASC nomination for its cinematographer, son of the legendary Harkness Smith, ASC. Ozzie Smith began his career in the camera department at MGM, where he apprenticed to an array of top-flight mentors, including George Folsey, ASC, Karl Freund, ASC, James Wong Howe, ASC and Robert Surtees, ASC, before gradually achieving his dream of becoming a director of photography. His television work prior to *Dr. Quinn* includes *Street Justice* and *Alien Nation*.

Smith's weekly rounds on *Dr. Quinn* require him to convincingly convey the atmosphere of the show's period setting, an 1860s Colorado mining town (which is actually located in Agoura Hills, CA). Part of the cinematographer's methodology is dictated by the show's 16mm format. After researching other shows shot in 16mm, Smith concluded that he would avoid high-speed film because of grain problems and sought out the two finest-grained stocks he could find, Kodak's 7245 and 7248. Because 16mm cameras lack dual-pin registration, camera stability and filtration were also crucial considerations. The camera's limitations, as well as the show's high number of exterior shots, led Smith to avoid the use of diffusion to ensure a full transfer.

The show's overall look — warm tones, rich blacks, and color saturation — was inspired by Vilmos Zsigmond, ASC's naturalistic work on *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*. Smith's undiffused photography is a departure from Zsigmond's approach, but the cinematographer explains that a soft look, while acceptable in 35mm, tends to lose depth and sharpness in 16mm.

Smith further enhances the look of the show by enlisting the aid of Digital Magic in post-production. The company's work helps him to maintain a consistent sky in scenes that may be shot over a period of hours, and to balance the exposure of the show's romantic couple, Jane Seymour and Joe Lando, who tend to reflect different amounts of light. Smith has also found that Digital Magic can help him compensate for his camera's inability to vary shutter speeds, a problem which forces him to rely upon dissolves and f-stop changes.

**Tim Suhrstedt**  
*Chicago Hope*  
"Over the Rainbow"

Suhrstedt's first Emmy nomination follows his 1994 ASC Award nomination for the series' pilot. In his last year of college, he was diverted from his original major of economics by an honors cinema course, for which he made a short thesis film. After graduating, he went to the Maryland public broadcasting offices and "sort of wheedled my way in there." Landing a job in the film department as a director-cameraman, Suhrstedt made documentaries on performing arts in the Baltimore-Washington area. There he decided that his interest was in cinematography, not directing, and he eventually left for the West Coast and a year at AFI.

For the next three years — while waiting to get into the union — he used his 16mm experience to shoot documentaries, industrials, and pre-MTV music videos. While assisting and operating on independent films, he traveled to Europe, Japan and Australia.

Suhrstedt got his first break on a low-budget feature *House on Sorority Row* by "badger-



ing [the producers] until they let me be the director of photography." He then shot several films for Roger Corman, including *Android*, "a tongue-in-cheek B-movie," and *Suburbia*, about the punk scene. Suhrstedt's other credits include *Teen Wolf*, *Mystic Pizza*, *Noises Off*, *Getting Even With Dad*, *Traces of Red*, *The Favor*, and *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure*, as well as episodes of *Picket Fences* and *Tales from the Crypt*.

Suhrstedt's relationship with the director of *Noises Off* paid off when the latter became a producer for *Chicago Hope* and asked him to shoot the pilot. Suhrstedt was impressed with the look of the sets, which simulated a state-of-the-art, high-tech hospital. "We wanted [the show] to look very fine-grained and sharp, but with very soft light," says Suhrstedt. He also avoided filtration "because of the natural degradation that results during broadcast. By the time a show is seen, [filtration] looks like a less-than-perfect lens."

The nature of the show makes for long hours; scenes in the operating room involve prosthetic effects, medical equipment, and animal organs. "The medical stuff is very complicated," he offers. "They go to great lengths to make [the medical procedures and environment] accurate."

Since shooting the pilot, Suhrstedt has used more and more mixed color temperatures on the series. "I almost never use a neutral light," he adds. "Everything's either cool or towards amber. We've gotten to like slightly cool fluorescents mixed with warm sun and blue skylight. It's on surfaces such as walls and floors, but also, as people turn their faces, they get different little glances and kicks of different colors."

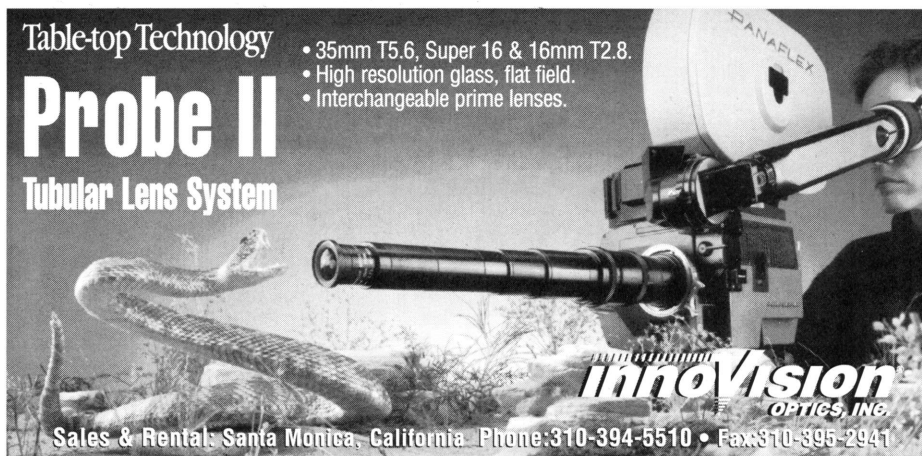
#### CINEMATOGRAPHY FOR A MINI-SERIES OR SPECIAL

##### Chuck Arnold *Take Me Home Again*

*Take Me Home Again* marks Chuck Arnold's second Emmy nomination, following a 1993 nomination for the mini-series *Jackie Collins' Lady Boss, Part One*. In 1957, Arnold started his career in

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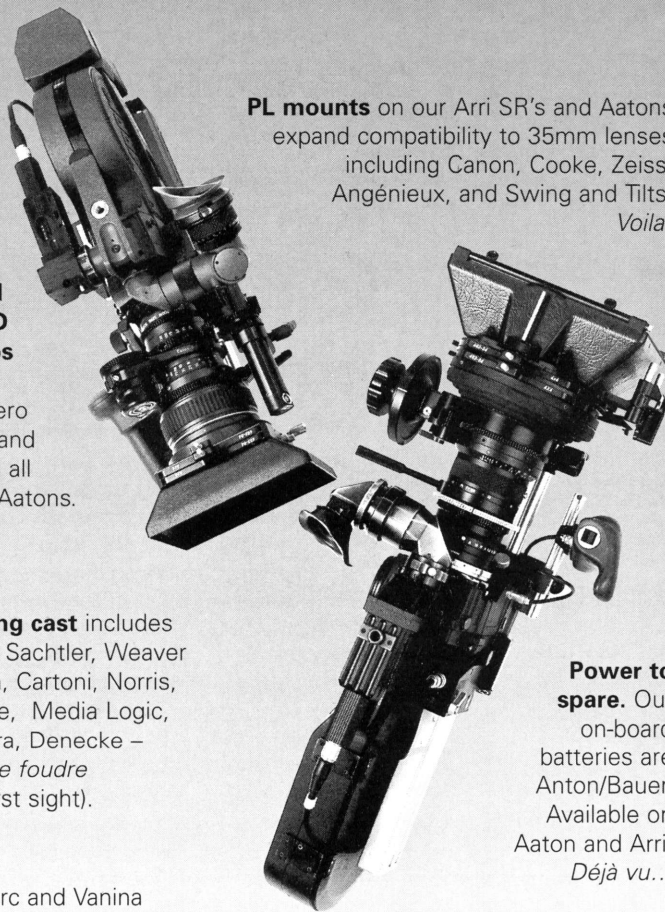
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the loading room at MGM Studios, where he went on to work for ten years under Fred Koenekamp, ASC. Arnold became a director of photography on the television series *Kung Fu* in 1974, and has since shot more than 300 hours of television programming, including such movies and mini-series as *Blood and Orchids*, *Blind Faith*, *Bloodlines: Murder in the Family* and *Message from 'Nam*.

"I try to go into each show open-minded and try not to duplicate what I've done in the past," says Arnold. "But with television's demands of speed and cost, you have to move fast." Over the course of his 20-plus years as a director of photography, Arnold notes a shift from stage work to shooting almost exclusively at practical locations; he hasn't shot on a stage in over three years. "[With practical interiors,] I try to use source lighting through the windows. If it's night I use the practicals as the motivating source. I always try to get a top-back light on the hair to separate the actors from the background, because we're usually not working on a stage. It used to be that you'd have a couple of stages that were always your sets, but now — especially with two-hour movies and mini-series — all of the sets are practical. That aspect makes it more difficult because you can't control the lighting as well."

#### **Thomas Del Ruth, ASC** ***My Brother's Keeper***

After winning two ASC Awards this year for his work on the heralded series *ER* and earning a prior nomination for the pilot of *The X-Files*, Thomas Del Ruth's long association with television has made him a fond believer in the medium.

"I find television a terrific medium," he concurs. "For me, my personality requires constant pace and motion . . . and I don't find that to be the case in feature films. The subject material I'm offered in television is also more compelling than doing youth comedies — which I had done a number of (*Fandango*, *The Breakfast Club*, *Look Who's Talking* and its sequel, and *The Mighty Ducks*) — or action/adventure (*The*

*Running Man*). If there was a proliferation of straight dramatic material available for feature films then I would be at the head of the line with a hundred other directors of photography. But I find shows like *ER*, *The X-Files* and the show I'm shooting right now, *Jag* — which is about the military legal system — to be very compelling material. A wide variety of subjects can be touched within an hour's show."

Asked about the often blitzkrieg pace of shooting a series on a virtual micro-schedule, Del Ruth relates, "I enjoy doing 25-40 setups a day as opposed to 12. I find features in some cases to be quite tedious in that aspect because there's an awful lot of wasted effort that goes on behind the camera. Essentially, you have the time, so why not take it? But it's not always dedicated toward the fulfillment of the task at hand — the making of the film — but more toward the personal aspect of individuals themselves. In television you don't have these elements. Egos are certainly in evidence on some television shows, but it is to most extent minor and tempered. Everyone's focus and direction are dedicated to the final product: getting the show done within the time allotted and within the budget's restraints."

*My Brother's Keeper* offered Del Ruth a chance to explore many complex layers of human emotional drama and integrate those subtleties into his rendering of the film. "*My Brother's Keeper* is about Tom and Bob Bradley, two teachers who lived on the East Coast, one of whom contracted AIDS and ultimately died of the disease. As opposed to what tragically happens to many AIDS victims, Bob was totally accepted by his students, as well as the surrounding community, which rallied to his aid to fund an experimental bone-marrow injection process. On the eve of the operation, however, his insurance company utilized a legal loophole and denied coverage claiming that [the process] was experimental and withheld the treatment which may or may not have saved his life. It's a rather poignant story of Bob's decline and the increasing

support he receives from his surrounding fellows."

Reveals Del Ruth, "What I tried to do visually with the picture was to start out with a cold, almost semi-documentary quality for the opening and then emotionally, as Bob gets to the point where his insurance is being denied, go toward a warm sunset feeling. Then at the end of the film, when Tom is giving a transfusion of blood to a visibly weakened and emaciated Bob in an empty classroom, we went into a very deep, full sunset. It was a poignant moment because the classroom is empty and Bob has essentially been abandoned by the medical community. So there's nothing to look forward to but death."

As actor John Lithgow portrayed both of the twin brothers, Del Ruth had to juggle tricky lighting and motion-control shots into a tight shooting schedule. "The technical aspects of the picture were very intriguing, especially when we had a two-shot of people walking at us. We would do one side of the matte — being very careful that the seam between the two was not invaded by the actors — then shoot the other. The lighting, once established, would light both the A and B mattes simultaneously. We'd tie the lights off so that there was no possibility of movement, so once the scene was recorded on the A side, the actor could change costumes and go to the B side without the ambiance, as well as the shadows, invading one or another."

Del Ruth remembers, "Years ago television movies used to be mostly the 'disease of the week.' But they have gotten away from being medical-oriented ailment films to become more emotional storytelling along the lines of a tragedy within one's life."

#### **Robert Primes, ASC** ***My Antonia***

A past ASC Award nominee for the pilot for *Reasonable Doubts*, Robert Primes, ASC finds himself readily at home in the frenetic world of hectic television production schedules and relentless budgeteering. Primes began his career in San Francisco as a direc-



tor of photography shooting documentaries and commercials before moving to Los Angeles. After building his resumé, he received critical attention for his trend-setting work on the first season of *thirtysomething* — which arguably influenced the visual style of many subsequent shows and commercials. He then went on to shoot 11 episodes of *Quantum Leap*, as well as the features *Bird on a Wire* and *The Hard Way* for director John Badham.

Discussing his work on *thirtysomething*, Primes recalls, "The producers were not picking people with long TV experience because they wanted the show to be different. Because the producers were gutsy, and always wanted to 'go for it' and make it contrasty, they gave me enormous freedom. I wasn't worried about making mistakes because they wanted me to push it, which made me braver than I might have been otherwise. I find you do better work when you're braver, when you want to take risks. As soon as you get conservative your work gets dull.

"I don't find series work, TV movies or pilots all that different," he adds. "In TV you cannot be a perfectionist. If you want to do bold, dramatic, exciting work, you've got to do it with bold strokes — try to come up with the ideas that don't take very thin brushstrokes to execute. I use very little fill because light is more dramatic when it's a single thrust, from one direction. You can either avoid mistakes or go for greatness. If you're afraid of making mistakes, you'll hold back a little. If I'm worrying that this is a little too much, I know that's a good sign — you know you're not safe, not tame."

A somber tale of unrequited love set at the turn of the century in the rural midwest, *My Antonia* posed several challenges for the cinematographer, one being that he had never shot a period piece where the era depicted didn't have the benefit of electricity. "I wanted to show how dark it is without electric lights. I had once worked on a documentary in Peru with only two little lanterns at night. You basically went to

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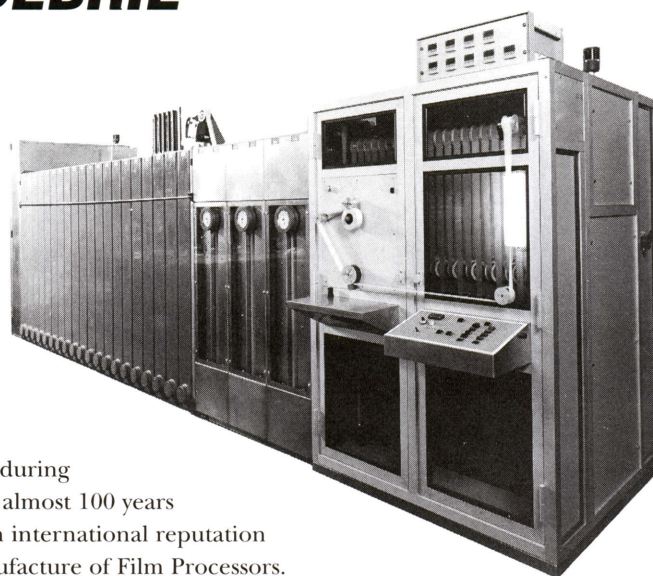
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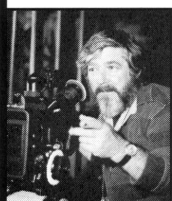
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bed with the sun, and got up with the sun. So [for *My Antonia*] the light sources were moonlight, firelight, sunlight, lanterns, stoves and candles." To achieve the naturalistic effect, Primes employed single-source and practical lighting for interiors throughout the production and utilized minimal filtration with the exception of some grads and Pola screens to enhance outdoors sequences.

He enthuses, "*My Antonia* is a classic piece of literature that is very much about Nebraska, the love of the land, and immigrants to the United States and their incredible hopes. The sacrifices they made moving across continents and oceans, going into steerage, leaving lives on the hope of trying to have a better life is staggering. This country was founded by the most idealistic group of people who risked everything. *My Antonia* was a script that made you cry after reading it. It was a very low-budget production, but everybody was doing it because the story touched and moved them."

### Richard Rawlings, ASC *Big Dreams & Broken Hearts: The Dottie West Story*

Richard Rawlings Jr., ASC, son of the late Richard Rawlings Sr., ASC, is no stranger to Emmy nominations, having amassed three prior nods.

Rawlings began his career at the age of 7, peering around his father's side and noticing the delicate art of lighting. He landed his first job as a director of photography on *Charlie's Angels*, alternating episodes with his father and undoubtedly unleashing chaos on the show's credit department. After completing three seasons, Rawlings photographed such episodics as *Strike Force*, *Matt Houston*, *Stingray*, *T.J. Hooker* and *L.A. Law*, as well as numerous made-for-television movies. He has been nominated for Emmys for his work on *Paradise*, *O'Hara* and *Reasonable Doubts*. He won the ASC Award in 1988 for his work on *Paradise* and in 1989 earned another nomination for the series. He was also nominated for the movie of the week *When Nobody Would Listen*.

Rawlings, who cites his father as a primary influence in his work, found his formal film studies at USC to be slightly repetitive with such a wealth of first-hand knowledge living under the same roof. He recalls, "I'm not putting USC down, but they were teaching me things I already had some knowledge of, because of my father."

Key to Rawlings' approach is a willingness to embrace spontaneity. "I'll walk onto a set that I've never seen before and my original ideas change about where the lights will go and about the feeling of the scene," he explains. "Then when I listen to the actors say the words, my ideas may change again. I always wait until the moment and then make my choices. I'm also not a technical person, so far as using formulas are concerned to determine lighting. I don't know *how* to do that. Outside, I guess the exposure and then use a meter. Inside, I know exactly how much light there is because I shoot by eye. I know what 20 foot-candles looks like."

As for his work on *Big Dreams & Broken Hearts: The Dottie West Story*, Rawlings says, "This show was a period piece, taking place from 1951 to the Nineties, with three distinct looks. It starts in the Fifties with Dottie at a very young age in a rural, poor part of Tennessee; we used color and different filters — ProMists outside and an 812 to warm things up — to suggest a different time without resorting to black-and-white or a purely sepia look. In the next segment during her rise to stardom, Dottie becomes very glitzy, so we got hard-edged and contrasty, and used straw and some tobacco filters. And finally we moved into modern times, which had very hard lighting with little fill and no filters."

While proud of his work on *Big Dreams*, Rawlings holds special praise for star/executive producer Michele Lee, who not only traversed time for her challenging role as West but personally brought the cinematographer onto the project. He also singled out his crew, many of whom proved their



dedication to the show by paying their own way to locations in Tennessee and Georgia.

**Michael Watkins, ASC**  
*Danielle Steele's*  
*Family Album*

Michael Watkins, ASC has already earned a 1994 ASC Award for this work, as well as a pair of Emmys (in 1990 and '91), an Emmy nomination, and three consecutive ASC Award nominations for the series *Quantum Leap*. His mantle also displays a number of Clio Awards.

Watkins has yet to take the accolades for granted. "I always felt like I had to drive myself harder every year. I'm always astonished to get nominated." His work on the long-running *Quantum Leap*, set in a different place and time and with a different director every show, was one of constant variety, which Watkins always enjoys. He also appreciated the show's emphasis on imagery, feeling that audiences are more visually sophisticated than they are given credit for.

He displayed his enthusiastic camerawork again on the feature *Point of No Return*, a remake of the French actioner *La Femme Nikita* and his break into big-budget films. "Mike goes from the dolly to the ground to the rafters," says John Stradling, assistant cameraman on *Point of No Return*. "He shoots from everywhere, and that keeps things very interesting." Gaffer Mark Abbot has called him a "cheerleader with a bullwhip."

His other feature credits include the comedy *Hearts and Souls* and the smaller-budgeted *Coonskin*, *Fighting Mad* and *Paramedics*. Other credits include the series *Scarecrow* and *Mrs. King* and *Almost Grown*.

"If you're slow, you're like a dinosaur," Watkins has said. "I like the momentum of television, because it teaches you a lot of good habits. You learn speed and attention to detail, and that's really important to carry with you." ❧

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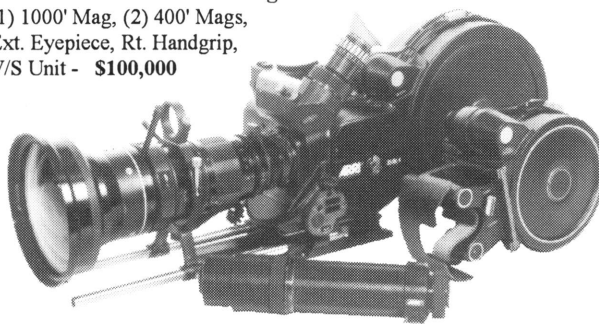
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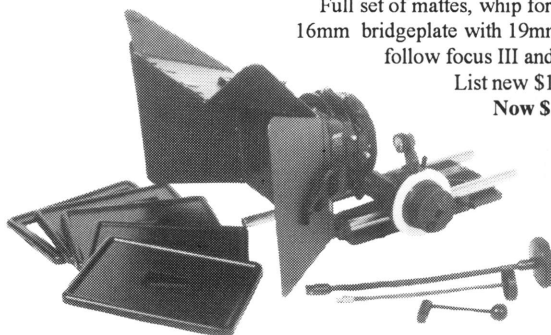
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# The Cyberthriller Comes of Age

Director Brett Leonard and cinematographer Gale Tattersall render the VR and real worlds of *Virtuosity*.

by Chris Probst

Right: Virtual arch-villain Sid 6.7 (Russell Crowe) is displayed on a "wall" of Optiwave screens, which utilize fused fiber-optic technology to increase image brightness and uniformity. Below: Director Brett Leonard (with viewfinder) and cinematographer Gale Tattersall (center) set up a shot. "Since I'm associated with VR and syneractive media," says Leonard, "I'm trying to put elements into the process of making films about this media that actually are the true media itself."

AS THE 21ST CENTURY LOOMS before us, pragmatic doom-sayers predict the end of mankind in a fiery heaven-sent apocalypse, or perhaps from a more dismal and ironic fate — by the hand of our own uprising machinery. Just as apprehensive Industrial Revolution-stricken pundits at the turn of the 20th Century had donned hard-hats for fear of a falling sky, we find ourselves equally poised for certain annihilation amidst the dawning of the Computer Millennium — the virtual micro-age.

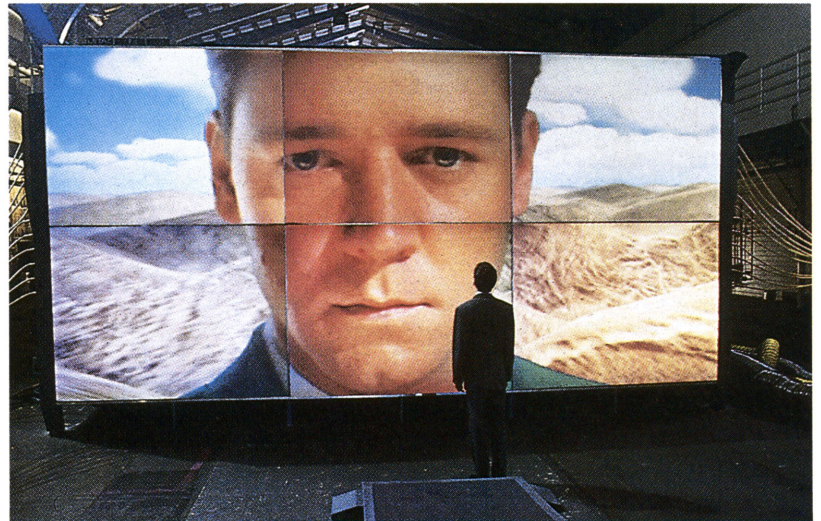
The themes of brazen scientific discovery, unchecked technological advance, and ethically undaunted engineers have been infused in a score of cautionary tales — *Frankenstein's* many incarnations, Lang's *Metropolis*, Cronenberg's *The Fly*, Cameron's *The Terminator* and Kubrick's *2001* — all harbingers of our most-assured Orwellian demise.

Now with *Virtuosity*, director Brett Leonard (*The Lawnmower Man*, *Hideaway*), and cinematographer Gale Tattersall call attention to the perils of some burgeoning new technological fields: virtual reality and nanotechnology.

Produced by Gary Lucchesi, Howard W. Koch Jr. and Gimel Everett and written by Eric Bernt, *Virtuosity* warns of the potential danger Leonard foresees in a possible near future. Set in Los Angeles in 1999, incarcerated ex-cop Parker Barnes (Denzel Washington) is given a second chance at life in exchange for hunting down the vicious Sid 6.7 (played by Russell Crowe of

"Gale is a very painterly cinematographer," says Leonard. "To have a cinematographer of his ability on this was a real joy and opportunity because he gives the visuals a much richer and more painterly feel than most action movies — which is not necessarily what you would see in this kind of movie."

Hailing from Great Britain, Tattersall started his career

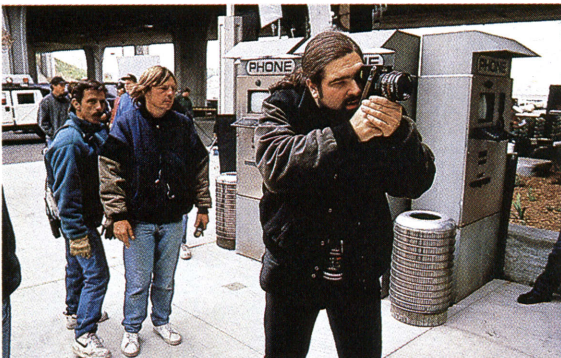


*The Quick and the Dead* and *Romper Stomper*) — a VR (virtual reality) composite-criminal who has escaped from cyberspace and is wreaking havoc on the City of Angels.

In tackling the production — Leonard's standard milieu of ambitious effects, shortened schedules and tight purse-strings — Tattersall became the obvious choice to photograph the futuristic thriller. As the cameraman had recently shot *Hideaway* for Leonard, the director knew that Tattersall could maintain the visual integrity they both envisioned for the cyber-laden project.

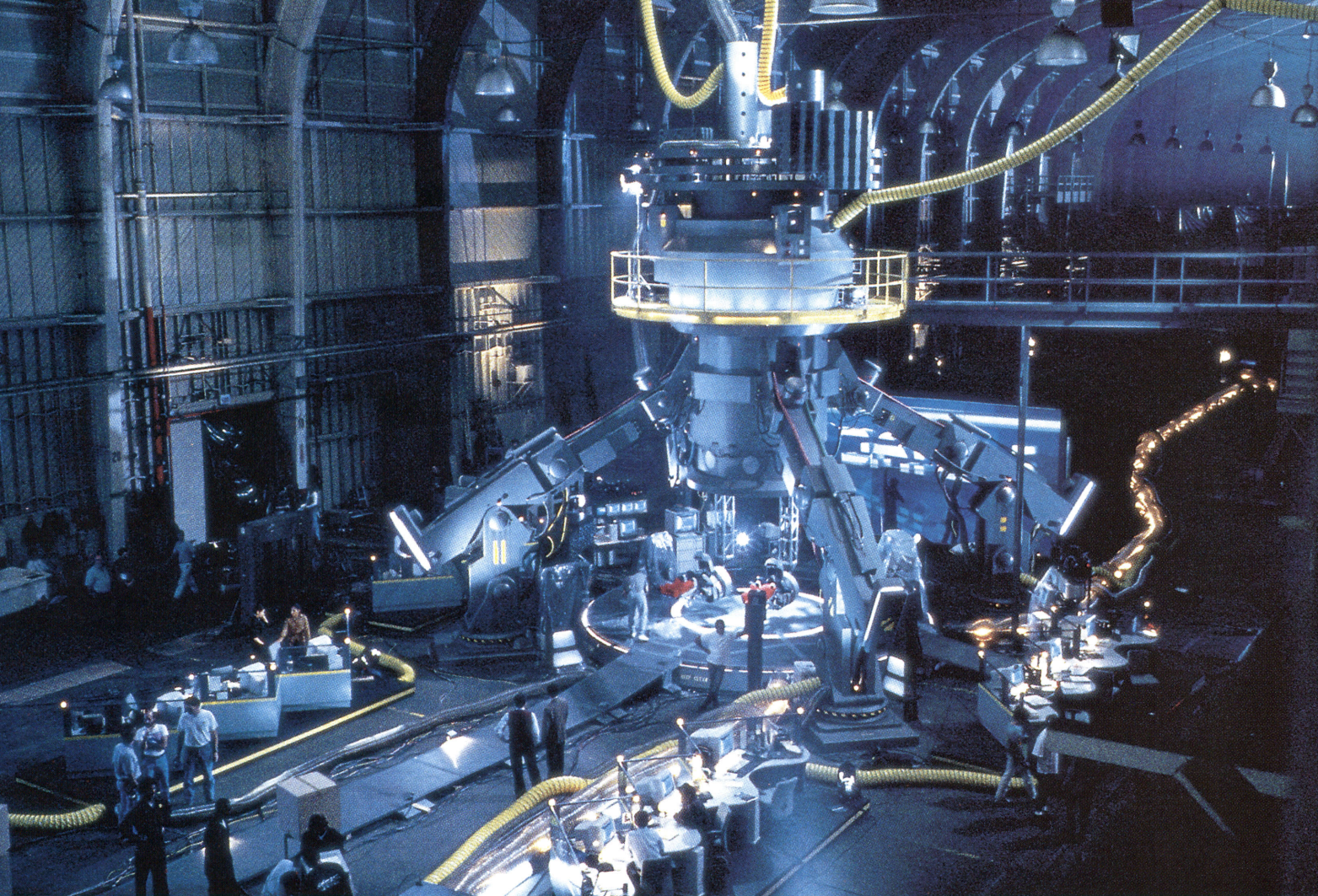
with a fascination for photography and began doing architectural stills. However, after being asked to shoot a documentary for a Buckminster Fuller exhibition, he was hooked into the filmmaking process and enrolled in film school in London.

"All the way through I concentrated on the photographic side of the filmmaking process," says Tattersall, "although I did try bits of the other crafts just to familiarize myself with them. These days, where we don't have the apprenticeship system with people working their way up in the studios any-



Photos by Sidney Baldwin and Bruce Birmelin, courtesy of Paramount Pictures





more, there's an awful lot one can miss. For example, it's very difficult to work your way up through a camera department and become a camera operator if you've never set foot in a cutting room. As an operator, you're making very critical choices in terms of framing and cutting — which, if you've had no experience in a cutting room, is very difficult to understand. That's something I don't think you can get very easily these days unless you go through film school."

Tattersall's documentary earned him a grant from the British Film Institute's production board, which was headed at the time by director Bruce Beresford (*Tender Mercies*, *Driving Miss Daisy*, *Black Robe*). Beresford was impressed enough to hire Tattersall to operate camera on several productions based in Australia. Returning to the UK, Tattersall then spent 14 years working as an

operator with such esteemed directors of photography as Phillippe Rousselot, David Watkin, Michael Seresin, and John Alcott while continuing to photograph documentaries.

"Operating is probably a more important issue in Britain, Europe and Australia — where a camera operator has more say in the structure of how a scene is going to be shot — than in the United States," Tattersall submits. "I think it's happening more and more here now, though I like to work with operators who do contribute a lot. It's rather sad that they often just get asked to perform certain mechanical shots, because there's a lot more to operating than that. In England, the sort of triumvirate of power that works out how a scene is shot is the director, the director of photography, and the operator — all of whom have a say in how a scene is going to

be structured. It's very much a three-man, consultative, decision-making process. Obviously if the director has done his homework he has very distinct and firm ideas as to how he'd like it, but there are often other suggestions that could take advantage of the light, the location, or what one's just seen the actors rehearse. From that point of view it's terribly important that operators know about cutting and composition — how pace and selective angles can build together to create a feeling."

Tattersall's additional credits as a director of photography range from Zalman King's steamy *Wild Orchid* and Alan Parker's acclaimed *The Commitments* to *Tank Girl* and half of *The Addams Family* — which brought Tattersall to the U.S. when he was asked to fill in for Owen Roizman, ASC, who had to fulfill other commitments.

*The immense L.E.T.A.C. set erected in the Spruce Goose hanger utilized every possible inch of the cavernous interior to add production value. Says Tattersall, "If I had to categorize my style of lighting, I would say it is the soft English school — soft but directional. You light something soft with huge sources and then drive everyone nuts by asking them to cut it."*



**Top:** Parker Barnes (Denzel Washington) is incarcerated after allowing the deaths of innocents during his pursuit of vigilante justice.

**Production designer Nilo Rodis' concept for the prison helped with Tattersall's foreboding lighting.**

**Bottom:** The rooftop finalé between Barnes and Sid

6.7 was shot on location high above downtown Los Angeles and on stage with TransLight backgrounds.

**Remarks** Tattersall, "We had a lot of nights. I love moody lighting. I love shadow — people's face's falling off into shadow — so I employed single sources as much as possible."

Tattersall shot the rooftop scene wide open and pushed 5293 one stop to balance the location's lighting to the nighttime city skyline.



For *Virtuosity* "Gale and I wanted a very strong, edgy, kinetic, graphic feel," says Leonard. "We had just done *Hideaway* together, which had much more of a gothic noir feel; this is much more visceral. We wanted the exteriors of Los Angeles to have this sort of bleached, near-future feel but without going too far. We didn't want to use too much filtration, but just enough to give us a feeling of a kind of 'oppressive' air."

Shot almost entirely with two cameras to meet the rigorous production schedule — Tattersall's own Arriflex 535B served as A-camera and a Moviemac Compact was used by B-camera/Steadicam operator Dave Luchenbach — *Virtuosity* was filmed in Super 35, a format both Tattersall and Leonard enthusiastically endorse.

"This is the fourth picture I've shot on Super 35, and I think it's an absolutely fantastic system," says Tattersall. "I would put it up against any anamorphic picture anytime. I absolutely promise it will save a fortune in terms of lighting with the stop you need, and it's also remarkably flexible. With anamorphic you've got this great lump of glass in there and all it's doing is stretching the picture like a fun-house mirror. Your choice of wide angles is also limited. I think the widest anamorphic lens you can get is a 28mm, which is



equivalent to a 14mm spherical. In Super 35 we could use the Zeiss 10mm, which would be an anamorphic 20mm — a lens that doesn't even exist because they can't make the glass work in that configuration. The one disadvantage of Super 35 is that you don't ever get a show print for your premiere from the original negative, but the anamorphic and IP processes are now are so excellent for Super 35 that it's a negligible difference."

Describing the ease of converting the camera for Super 35, Tattersall notes, "Basically, all that's required is shifting the lens port over a fraction. You can shoot right down to T1.3 and the results are still quite wonderful."

Tattersall elected to shoot the film entirely on Eastman's

200 ASA EXR 5293. He says, "I've actually put it under a microscope, looked at the grain structure and compared it to 5296 and 5298. I think it's the best film stock ever. I found that it's very important if you're shooting Super 35 to try to have a very nice, rich exposure on the negative. If you're a little bit thin, it can lead to quite dreadful results in the blow-up process and increase grain. But if you've got a healthy negative, it really is quite a wonderful stock. 5296 — or even 98 — can be a little bit dangerous; if you're a little bit thin, it can fall apart on you and go a bit mushy.

I've pushed 93 a lot, especially for night exteriors, to EI 320 and couldn't notice much of a grain buildup or any significant buildup of contrast. Pushing it a stop in the tests I did, it looked more like about two-thirds of a stop increase in ASA."

In his preparations for the film, Tattersall also had to juggle the logistics of executing lighting for large action sequences — in addition to shooting on immense stages, skyscraper rooftops or with hundreds of projection screens in the shot. Not to mention deal photographically with actors who had completely dissimilar complexions. Accomplishing all of this quickly necessitated shooting with two cameras, utilizing as much pre-lighting as possible,



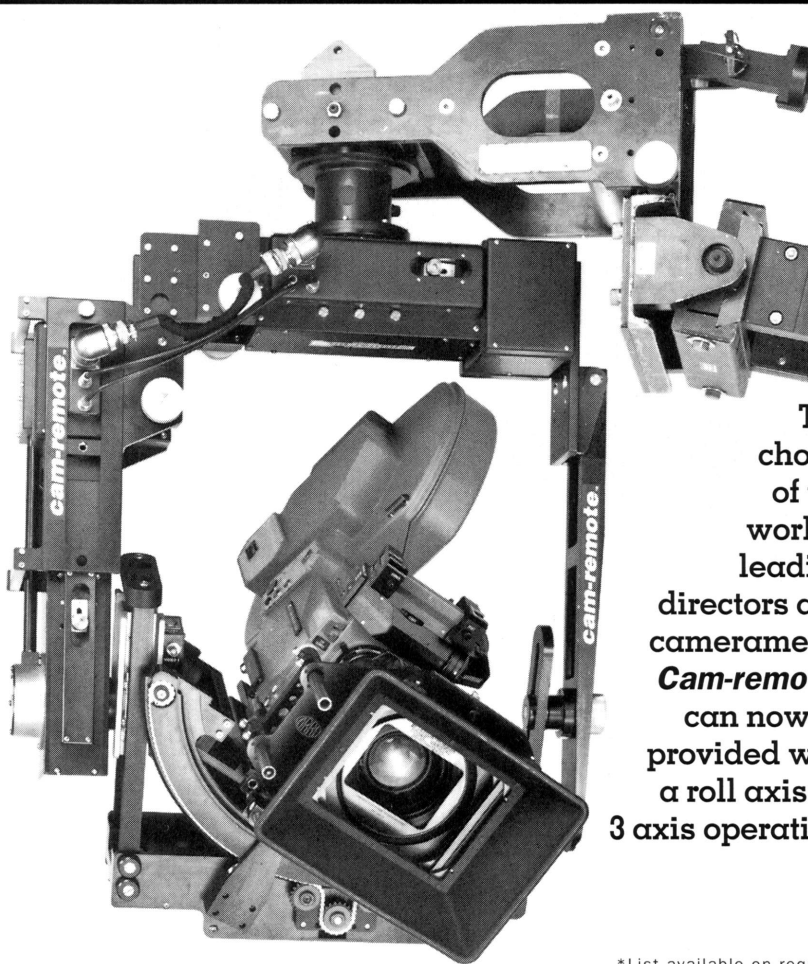
and having state-of-the-art LCD/ large-screen viewing systems available.

"Denzel Washington is very dark-skinned and his co-star, Kelly Lynch, is very pale," recounts the cinematographer. "Just having the two of them in a scene together immediately meant contrast problems. It was very easy to lose facial detail on Denzel or to burn out on Kelly. So with all of the movements we'd block out in a scene, I had to make sure Kelly didn't get closer to a key light than Denzel did. On top of that, Brett is somebody who feels that if a camera doesn't move in a shot, it's literally broken — there's something wrong with it! But I think that's something that works well in an action picture such as *Virtuosity* — to keep a sense of momentum going, to keep up the urgency and reveal an element to shock or surprise the audience. I've never worked with a director who liked to use camera movement so much.

"We had to shoot with two cameras because of the sheer burden of the work," he continues. "Of course, using two cameras has a big effect on how I'm going to light a scene. As soon as the cameras start diverging, you're not going to be very happy with the way the lighting looks for one of them; it either gets flatter and flatter or you need to add a tiny bit more fill if it's too shadowed — which destroys the look of the other shot. So there are compromises all the way around. My main lighting design for the picture was to make the lighting as flexible as possible. It's a terrible suicidal *cul de sac* when you get so precious about the lighting for particular scenes that you just don't get through the scheduled work. With the amount of coverage we had to get — especially in an action-type picture where you need a million cuts to make a sequence work — you couldn't just hang back on a wide angle and let it all happen in front of the lens. You need cut after cut after cut. I had to pre-light huge spaces so

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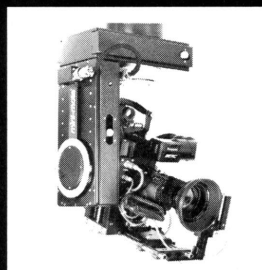
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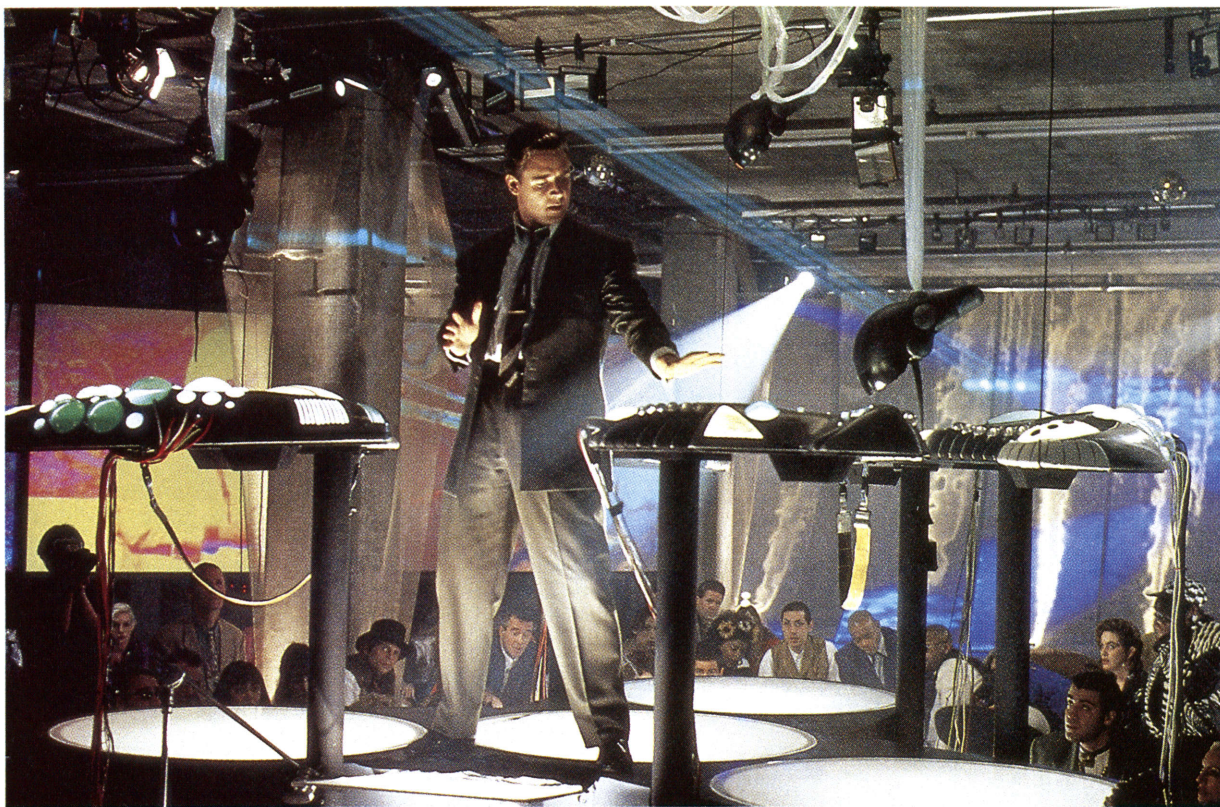
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*Sid 6.7 performs at the Media Zone nightclub, which was visually dominated by large, real-time video effects on multiple screens. Says Tattersall, "The Optiwave screens are like a piece of opal Plexiglas with bundles of fiber-optics that come in from the back and then split and spread out in the front. Even at an absolutely acute angle, the screens are only a half of a stop down from when you look at them completely flat. I shot the scene with those [intentionally] serving as the brightest part of the visual imagery."*



that we didn't have a major turnaround time, because shooting time is like a big taxi-meter in the sky. That's where pre-lighting really comes into its own. If you get your pre-lighting right then you really can shoot efficiently. The last thing anyone wants to hear when you're actually in a shooting mode is, 'Oh, sorry, can I have four hours to light for the reverses?'

"I couldn't have done the film without my gaffer Pat Blymyer. We shot for 15 weeks and did something like 1700 set-ups in that time, which is a massive amount — and that's including all of our visual effects, which were mostly done by first unit with supervision by visual effects supervisor John Townley.

"I was often shooting two totally separate shots in different directions simultaneously because sometimes I think one can afford to make compromises — especially in an action picture. If the director just needs a two-second cut of something happening, and the editorial is going to suffer without it, let's compromise and let's just get that shot

and not be too precious about matching. Obviously one uses the best of one's ability to match things, but sometimes it's more important to get the shot than it is to be precious about it. A lot of this comes out of being smart when you pre-light. You can pre-light in such a way that things are very easily changeable. You can switch lamps off and switch other lamps on without having to move them. If you think of all of those possibilities, it gives you a fighting chance to actually come up with something that looks presentable, and to do it in the time scheduled."

*Virtuosity* was shot entirely in and around Los Angeles locations and on stages starting last January 25th. For the enormous L.E.T.A.C. (Law Enforcement Training Advancement Center) set, the production built a VR police training simulator in the legendary Howard Hughes aircraft hangar in Long Beach, CA, where the *Spruce Goose* was built. The wooden structure measures 780' x 120' — 319,000 square feet, or approximately the length of two football fields — and has

ribbed walls which added production value at no additional expense to the filmmakers.

"There's no use in shooting in there unless you're going to see it," Tattersall points out. "We could have just shot on a stage. So we shot the ceiling, the walls, all of the way down, all of the way back. I used practicals called Cyber-Lights that could be controlled from the ground by computer so that I could create different lighting patterns. It's obviously very difficult when you want to make a change to a lamp rigged up in the highest part of the ceiling. I put Cyber-Lights up there knowing that I could pan one around, spot it in a little bit, dim it, put a tiny bit of hair light on an actor, or add some fill into a corner — and control it all from the desk down below. We had four HMI Pars boring down through the center of the big VR simulator — a big mechanical spiderlike creation — just to create a huge splash of light right down. We also had a lot of light coming up through a platform of grating to create uplight. In order to define the space



of the hangar, I had rows of 2Ks hidden all the way down one side of the building, up-lighting the wooden structure — on every other rib down the entire side. The building almost looks like Noah's Ark turned upside-down. We then used 6K clear-glass Brutes — which are favorite lamps of mine because they have really beautiful light — coming through specially-made wooden shuttered partitions up on the balcony over to one side. They put in really defined, crystal-sharp shafts of light going all the way down to the end of the building. We also had 2'-diameter clear plastic tubing with pulsating lights inside snaked all around the set. It worked quite well for creating perspective. You can see the pipe, which is obviously very big, running off to the distant background."

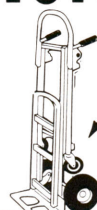
At the center of the large VR simulator set was a formidable display "wall" on which the virtual environment could be seen. "We had the biggest LCD screen in the world and six Barco 8100 LCD projectors," says Leonard. The arrayed display measured 24' x 12' and was made with Optiwave screen material, which utilizes fused fiber-optics to allow filming from even oblique angles without a noticeable loss in screen brightness. However, the huge display did somewhat dictate how Tattersall would light and expose sequences on the L.E.T.A.C. set.

"There are a tremendous number of screens in the movie and the look of the screens was very key," explains Leonard. "My company, L<sup>2</sup> Communications, did all of the computer graphic visuals seen on all of the screens, as well as the visual effects in the film — so Gale and I were able to coordinate the look of the screens. The Optiwave material created a very saturated, windowing look with the background screens, which really became the environment for the film — media itself, in a sense. It's saturated with media imagery in many layers in each frame, so

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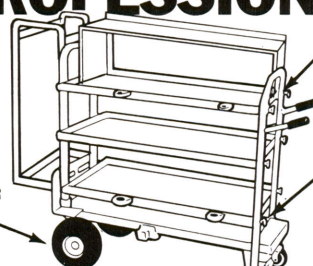
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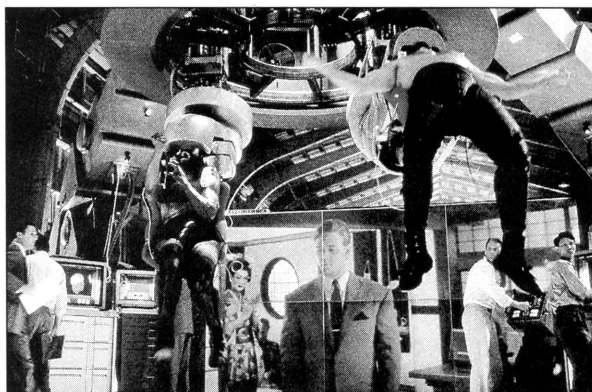
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*Officers encounter Sid 6.7 in cyberspace at L.E.T.A.C. Explains Tattersall, "We had to shoot elements at the front of the schedule to be processed with CGI to appear on the screens at the end of the picture."*



that defined the look and the way we exposed. We wanted the screens to really pop. I'm very disappointed with the way a lot of rear-projection systems look on film, so we used the highest-tech stuff that exists — no one else has done anything even close to this."

The use of the Optiwave screens played a crucial role in the design of the Media Zone nightclub sequence. "This is where Sid 6.7 goes once he has found himself a real body and heads out into the streets," Tattersall explains. "Because he's a VR creature and instinctively loves to perform, he goes to this club which has a Karaoke-like video setup — people dance to the music while live video shots are projected on these amazing screens."

Sid 6.7's entrance at the club was captured on Hi-8 video. Those signals were then morphed, warped, colored and otherwise altered by the *Virtuosity* graphics team through banks of computers and video toasters in real time. The images were projected live on screens behind the VR villain as the scene was shot.

As Barnes (Washington) pursues Sid 6.7 with criminal psychologist Dr. Madison Carter (Lynch), he learns that the program designer who created the sadistic criminal for the VR simulator assembled Sid's mindset by engineering a gruesome composite of history's most heinous murderers. Among the morbid line up, which includes Charles Manson, Adolph Hitler and 181 more of the most aberrant per-

sonalities of all time, is Matthew Grimes — the terrorist responsible for killing Barnes' wife and daughter and landing the vengeful cop in the local penitentiary.

While crafting the prison set, which was built on stage at Paramount, production designer Nilo Rodis worked closely with Tattersall to create a foreboding feel and facilitate the lighting of the stronghold. The cinematographer relates, "Nilo designed the cell block with a really beautiful laminated plastic material that is almost like bubble-glass." Using plastic segments 1" in thickness, Rodis placed the mesh-screen pattern over each cell. "You could just see shadows of all the [backlit] convicts behind them," Tattersall notes.

"I had Xenons bouncing into mirrors to project beams down through moving fan blades," adds Tattersall. "So as Barnes is led down the main corridor of the prison, he moves in and out of these shafts of light. Then you have these fearsome shadows of ranting and raving prisoners stacked up six floors high. It's a pretty spectacular scene. The set actually touched the permanents, so it was a bitch to light. I had to have the top of the set painted three stops darker than the bottom because I was lighting with a soft top-light — a 20' by 20' bounce literally five feet from the permanents lit with 4K Pars. That's where somebody like Nilo, who understands those things, really helps. If you asked a lot of designers to do that, they'd think you were nuts, but



when we lit the set it looked just about even."

Flashback scenes depict Barnes's confrontation with the terrorist Grimes — a standoff that results in the deaths of Barnes' family and a television crew. Tattersall employed skip-bleach processing to retain silver in the negative through the ECN development. "It's a wonderful look," he attests. "The silver desaturates the color enormously and makes everything look very gritty and contrasty. It also makes the blacks really dense. Something I also did on *Hideaway* — which would cause most lab men to have a complete heart attack if you asked them to do it — was to run [unexposed] stock through the first bath, which washes off the anti-halation backing, and take it right to the drying cabinet. We'd then shoot with it. Dave Harden at Gastown labs in Vancouver agreed to do it, so I had a special chrome pressure plate — which was basically a mirror — made for our 535B. I would add loads of highlights [in a shot] knowing that they would focus on the film, then bounce off the pressure plate and fuzz out. For example, a bare lightbulb would look like this enormous glowing orb. It's a really neat effect, but one that's prone to problems because the anti-halation backing has several functions apart from stopping the light from going through and bouncing back. It also stops static buildup. We had little problems with static, but the effect was quite marvelous. It's exactly why some turn-of-the-century photography was so beautifully romantic — they used glass plates which didn't have a backing on them. It was almost like, 'My God, were they using SupaFrost on the windows?' David Watkin tried it on *Yentl*, but because he wanted to do the whole picture that way, they wouldn't insure the negative; it's a risky process."

As Sid 6.7 continues his barbarous adventures, he attends a wrestling match at a sports arena. Tattersall recalls, "We built a huge, beautiful 40' by 40' soft

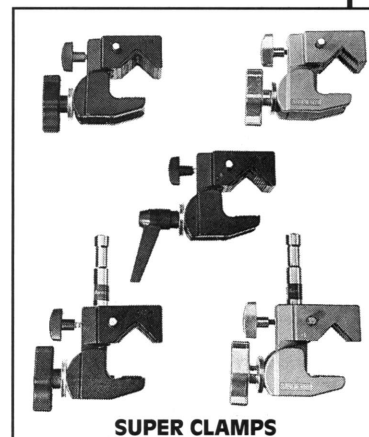
light over the top of the wrestling ring — all on chain motors with the lights built in — to create an ambiance that falls off as you get further and further from ring-side. I used a lot of smoke to make it feel gritty and then let the light fall off into shadow so we had just the suggestion of shapes. We didn't actually have 20,000 extras that day, so we used the lighting to add production value and make the arena look really packed. The ring-light was basically a great big square black box that created a huge downward soft-light — like a Fisher light. In post we matted live TV coverage of the fight in real time on each side of the four enormous panels."

For the film's climatic confrontation, the production moved to the top of a skyscraper in downtown Los Angeles. "We shot on the Gastower building," recalls Tattersall, "which I think is the third tallest building in L.A. Thank God it wasn't the tallest, because I wouldn't have had anywhere to light it from!"

Two adjacent office towers became Tattersall's lighting platforms. Windows were removed and banks of 12 4K Pars were installed to source the location rooftop. "If we had to shoot looking toward one of those buildings, I'd switch those lights off and switch on the ones I had positioned on the other. I lit the whole rooftop to as low a level as I dared so we could get all of the street and city lights to read in the background — which meant shooting at T1.3, pushed.

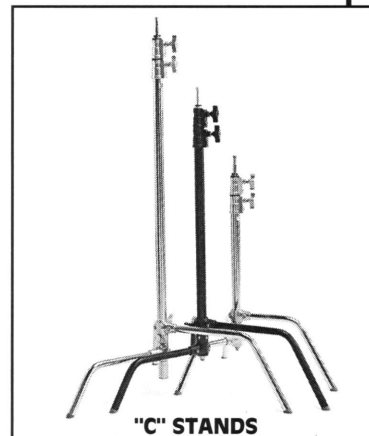
"The story involved a helicopter gun battle, so we shot helicopter to helicopter using a regular Tyler mount, which gave us the flexibility to swing, move and zoom. I used a T2.3 Cooke zoom. Obviously you use a zoom on a helicopter rather than primes, because it's a bit boring to be stuck on primes, and it's difficult to get what you need. At T2.3 I was a little bit underexposed, but I just about got away with it. For the shots flying in toward the building, we reduced

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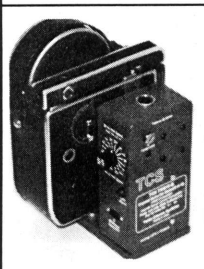
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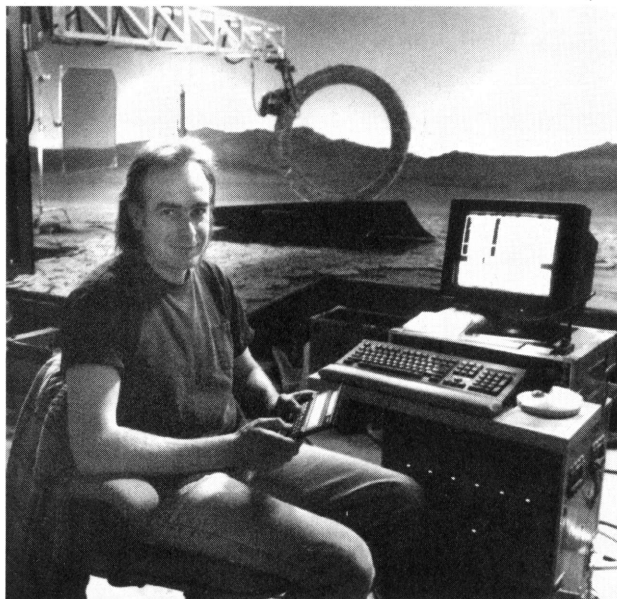


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our lighting on the rooftop so that it didn't stand out as being the only one lit in the city. So I knocked our lighting to the absolute bare minimum, which was about two stops under with the T2.3 pushed — and in this case I pushed to a full 400 ASA rating. It really looked quite good. I would be quite flummoxed as to how to achieve that kind of look with anamorphic lenses, when the zooms are around a T4 or T3.9.

"We shot all of our masters on the real location and then rebuilt the rooftop on stage, almost inch by inch as a perfect scale replica, to shoot all of our close-ups and interlinking material. On stage we used huge TransLights as backgrounds. Luckily it all matched very well.

"That's another advantage of Super 35," Tattersall expands. "You can light a massive amount of street with a Musco light — in our case we also used the Nightsun — and shoot your night exteriors at ASA 320 at T1.3 or thereabouts. If we were shooting in anamorphic we would have had to use multiple sources to cover the scenes we were shooting, and that drives me a little bit nuts in terms of the multiple shadows and how they overlap. I tend to shoot uncorrected on the lens, using 1/4 CTOs on HMIs and 1/2 CTOs on the Muscos, which tend to be a little cooler. I just pulled it back a little so we wouldn't go too blue."

Asked to sum up his experiences on *Virtuosity*, Tattersall concludes, "I took it all with a pinch of salt. When you're with the director and you dream about all of the wonderful things you're going to do — which is a terribly important part of the process — some ideas go out the window because they're time-consuming, or because the ideas are too elaborate or expensive, or because [the script] has changed. So you just try to preserve as much of the original idea as possible while compromising like hell. That's just the nature of the beast."



# Peter Pan Escapes Cinematic Neverland

Having survived the passing of the Silent Era, the 1924 film version of this classic fantasy offers charming performances and visuals.

by Frederick C. Szebin

ONE OF THE FEW SILENT ERA FILMS TO SURVIVE INTO THE present day, despite having gone missing until the 1950s, is 1924's *Peter Pan*. More than half of the films from that era are lost; no negatives, prints or clips remain of far too many motion pictures from this most influential period of cinema history. In the case of *Peter Pan*, for which there is a fine 35mm print, the only reason for its continued absence from public view is pure neglect.

The film is based on the renowned play by Sir James M. Barrie, which was first performed on December 27, 1904. Casting a woman in the role of Peter Pan would become a theatrical tradition due, among other factors, to the fact that petite actresses were easier to lift in the old harnesses for the flying scenes. In his initial incarnation, the character of Peter Pan was remarkably portrayed by Maude Adams, on whose memory every actress would fearfully tread for decades afterward.

The well-known story begins when the Darling children, Wendy, John and Michael, are taken from their nursery by Peter Pan, a magical boy who ran away from home on the day

he was born. They fly to Never-Never Land, where the contemptible Captain Hook is out for revenge on Pan, who, during a past battle, had served the captain's hand to a crocodile. Hook tries to poison Peter, but gets Pan's magical fairy, Tinker Bell, instead.

After saving Tink, Pan goes with his band of Lost Boys, other children who left the crib and wound up in this magical land, to save Wendy, their surrogate mother, from Hook and his band of bloodthirsty pirates. Hook's ship is captured and the pirate king is forced to walk the plank. Wendy, her brothers and the Lost Boys are taken back to the Darling household, where all but Pan are adopted. Choosing to remain

forever young and playful, Peter Pan returns to Never-Never Land to play his flute and await further adventures.

The February 10, 1924 issue of *Moving Picture World* announced Famous Players-Lasky's intention of producing a film based on the famed play. Famous Players-Lasky had purchased the film rights to the play in a bulk deal that included a number of Barrie's other works. As a private game, the author wrote a screen scenario of *Peter Pan* to see how he could expand the story from the constraints of the stage.

Notes were made to potential producers about the importance of the film's flying sequences: "The flying must be far better and more elaborate than in the acted play, and should cover of course

a far wider expanse. [The flying] should show at once that the film can do things for *Peter Pan* which the ordinary stage cannot do. It should strike a note of wonder in the first [scene] and whet the appetite for marvels."

Constant flashbacks to described actions, such as Peter cutting off Hook's hand and throwing it to the croc, or Hook being



chased around the world by the insatiable beast, fleshed out the characters' pasts and added a strong visual sense to the cinematic adaptation. But Barrie didn't stop there. He added scenes involving sentient flowers following Pan to the mermaid's lagoon, a tree-top football game involving flying Lost Boys, and Peter attending a fairy wedding which served no purpose but to add some beautiful visuals. Most of these images were discarded in favor of director Herbert Brenon's more literal translation of the stage play.

Herbert Brenon was one of the first film directors to have a critical and public following. Born in Dublin in 1880, he came to America in the 1890s, even-

**Betty Bronson stars as a contemplative Peter Pan in the silent classic.**



Right: *Pan deals with an amorous Wendy (Mary Brian), giving contemporary Freudians more food for thought than they deserve.* Below right: *The role of Captain Hook offered Ernest Torrence a chance to be broad and grandiose without the fear of "scenery chewing" criticism.*



tually bought a movie theater in Johnstown, Pennsylvania and later moved to New York to work as a scenarist-editor at Carl Laemmle's IMP company. This led to directing jobs in Europe and to the 7-reel Annette Kellerman film *Neptune's Daughter* in 1915. *The Two Orphans* (1917) with screen vamp Theda Bara and *The Fall of the Romanoffs* (1917) gave Brenon two of his biggest successes and strengthened his position in motion pictures. Later, Barrie's *A Kiss for Cinderella* (1926) got Brenon's treatment, as did P.C. Wren's *Beau Geste* (1926) with Ronald Colman and William Powell, and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1926), starring Warner Baxter and Lois Wilson.

Roy Pomeroy, ASC received co-director credit on *Peter Pan* for his special visual effects work, which includes flying children, stunning miniatures and a pirate ship that rises spectacularly from the ocean to ride the skies over London. Pomeroy served as Paramount's West Coast Studio special effects director through the Silent Era and well into the talkies. He won an Academy Award for his synchronized sound effects for William Wellman's *Wings* (1926) and claimed the parting of the Red Sea in Cecil B. DeMille's 1923 epic *The Ten Commandments* among his technical achievements. Pomeroy is credited with developing Paramount's method of film sound recording, and was awarded a medal in 1929 by Salvador G. Becerra, President of La Liga Cultural Mexicana, for exceptional accomplishment in science and art.

James Wong Howe, ASC, who in 1924 had already served as cinematographer on five Brenon pictures, became a legend in the industry through his use of low-key, expressionistic cinematography. By the time of his death in 1976, he had won two Oscars, one for *The Rose Tattoo* (1955), and the other for his work on *Hud* (1963). But in his biography of Howe, author Todd Rainsberger states that the cameraman's work in *Peter Pan* was largely inconsistent: "... the film is marked by an uneven approach in which brilliant photography is juxtaposed with unimpressive work." And while Howe's lighting in this feature may be a bit flat at times and indecisive at others, *Peter Pan* serves as an early example of the burgeoning skill of an important cinematic artist.

The *Peter Pan* property languished on the Paramount shelf, Moving Picture World surmised,

because "it is understood that it was held off in the hope that Maude Adams, who created the title role and who scored her biggest success in it, would change her mind and return to the stage. Apparently hope of getting Miss Adams back on the stage has been abandoned, and as *Peter Pan* cannot be conceived without her in the title role, arrangements for its production in motion pictures are being pushed in the Famous Players offices."

The immediate opening of the title role led to a landslide of pretty, elfin actresses to the FPL casting office. Lillian Gish had been mentioned at one point, with May MacAvoy announced as early as 1921 in the *New York Morning Telegraph*. "May MacAvoy now heads the list of contestants for the coveted title role," the paper stated, "and there is little doubt that it will be handed to her."

But by 1924, the list of possible Pans grew to include such silent favorites as Marguerite Clark, Betty Compson and industry heavyweight Mary Pickford.

Moving Picture World printed a vehement denial from United Artists president Hiram Abrams of Pickford's possible involvement in the film: "Miss Pickford has no intention of making pictures for distribution through any organization other than United Artists Corporation. . . All reports that Miss Pickford will produce *Peter Pan* for any other organization are erroneous, and there is no doubt in my mind that the



many recent rumors concerning Miss Pickford's future production activities have been set afloat for purposes of propaganda in behalf of other persons."

Canisters of film containing numerous auditions from the many hopefuls were sent to England for Barrie's perusal. Ultimately, studio head Jesse Lasky received a telegram from the author; "I have chosen Betty Bronson to play Peter Pan. Regards, Barrie."

Born Elizabeth Ada Bronson in 1907, the Trenton, New Jersey native went from bit parts in New York-based films to numerous West Coast Paramount productions. Her appearance in *Java Head* in 1923 led to her being one of the hopefuls included in the shipment of auditions sent to Barrie.

Starring in *Peter Pan* may have been the best and worst thing ever to happen to Bronson. It made her a recognizable name to moviegoers, but Paramount executives never quite knew how to utilize her afterwards. She later made a few notable films, including *Are Parents People?* (1925), *Ben Hur* (1925), *A Kiss For Cinderella* (1926) and *The Singing Fool* (1928). But





Photo: Bison Archives

fewer roles came to her until she went into a near-retirement from the screen to concentrate on a stage career and her marriage to millionaire Ludwig Lauerhous. She appeared in many television series throughout the 1960s and made her final appearance in the George Hamilton vehicle *Evel Knievel* in 1971, the year of her death.

*Peter Pan* opened doors for a couple of its younger performers. Esther Ralston, who at the age of 22 played Mrs. Darling with three children, went from vaudeville to become one of the silver screen's most popular ingenues. *A Kiss For Cinderella* and *The American Venus* (1926) took her into the sound era, where she worked until 1940, when she retired from films to go into radio.

In her autobiography *Someday We'll Laugh*, Ralston detailed the peculiar events that led to her casting as Mrs. Darling. While making a Western with Tom Mix, Ralston was called to Lasky's office to audition for the role. Mix lent her his customized town car, which included a special sign that lit up and read TOM MIX when the doors were opened. Shown into Lasky's office in her fringed leather skirt, cowboy boots, a large Stetson covering her braided hair and

with a six-gun on either hip, Ralston almost lost the role right there. But Famous Players-Lasky executive Walter Wanger's understanding led to a suitable costume change that changed Lasky's mind.

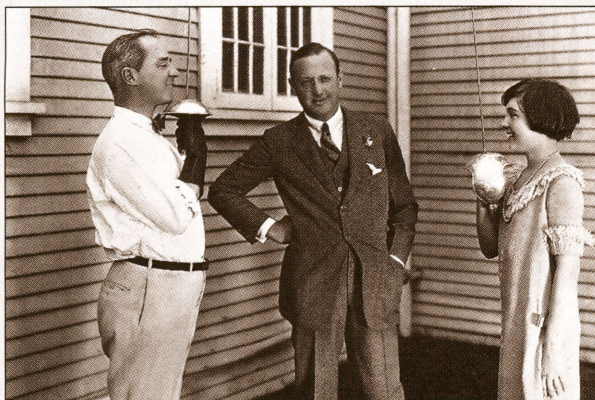
It was at a Hollywood beauty pageant that Ralston met Louise Dantzler, winner of the Miss Personality competition. Slated to play Wendy, Dantzler was introduced a few days later at a *Peter Pan* cast gathering with the new name Mary Brian. Brian's initial foray into film led to a strong career in silents and talkies. *Beau Geste* (1926), *The Virginian* (1929), *The Front Page* (1931) and *The Man on the Flying Trapeze* (1935) feature some of her more notable performances. During World War II she became a popular figure at bond drives throughout Hollywood.

Anna May Wong serves as a stoic Tiger Lily in *Peter Pan*. After appearing as a slave girl in Douglas Fairbanks' grand *Thief of Bagdad* (1923), exotic oriental beauties became her trademark. She segued into talkies in *Daughter Of Shanghai* (1937), *Shanghai Express* (1942), *Dangerous To Know* (1938) and *Island of Lost Men* (1939). She performed onstage with Laurence Olivier in "Circle of Chalk" and appeared in her final film in 1960, *Portrait in Black*.

**Director Herbert Brenon consorts with Captain Hook and his salty crew of cutthroats on location at Catalina Island.**



Brenon,  
producer Jesse  
L. Lasky and  
Bronson at the  
Lasky lot.



As Captain Hook, Ernest Torrence turned in an appropriately histrionic performance in a role that has become a prized part for any theater actor. Torrence was an operatic baritone who found a comfortable niche in silents and early talkies. His character performances can be found in *Tol'able David* (1921), *The Covered Wagon* (1923), *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1923) and *I Cover the Waterfront* (1933).

When she wasn't being doubled by a light bulb on a wire, Virginia Browne Faire got to appear as Tinker Bell, *Peter Pan*'s jealous pixie friend. At 5'2", one critic referred to her as "a dainty, delightful bit of femininity." Browne Faire won a film magazine beauty contest in 1920 and went on to appear with Will Rogers in *Doubling for Romeo* (1921), with John Gilbert in *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1922), and with John Wayne in *West of the Divide* (1934). She also starred in Frank Capra's first sound film, 1929's *The Donovan Affair*. She retired from film in the late 1930s to work in radio and industrial films.

The only cast member to reprise his stage role in the film was professional animal imitator George Ali, as the watchful canine nursemaid Nana. The suit he wore as the human-like dog incorporated an intricate series of strings lining the inside of the suit from the eyes, ears, mouth and tail to Ali's fingers. A bend of one series of fingers brought perked alertness to Nana's ears, while another series of finger movements created wounded feelings in expressive eyes.

Paramount players Cyril Chadwick (as Mr. Darling, a role that the stage reserves for the same actor who plays Hook), Jack Murphy (John) and Philippe DeLacey (Michael) rounded out the cast. Young Mr. DeLacey proved to be less than darling during the interminable waiting periods necessary while making a motion picture, as Esther Ralston related in her autobiography. "One day the cameras were being set up for a big close-up of me as Mrs. Darling, with Wendy, John and Michael in my arms. Eight-year-old Philippe DeLacey was playing Michael and his blonde head just reached my waistline. We had to hold our pose for some 10 minutes until the lighting suited James Wong Howe, our wonderful cameraman. Just as Mr. Brenon called 'Camera!,' I let out an agonized 'Ouch!' 'Cut!' was called by Mr. Brenon. 'What in Heaven's name is the matter, Esther?'"

"It's Michael," I blushed in embarrassment.

"He bit me in the stomach."

"After Mr. Brenon had explained to young Philippe that no matter how long it took to set up for a scene, or how bored he became waiting, he was under no circumstances to bite Miss Ralston again, we were able to go on with the scene."

Much of the picture was photographed on Santa Catalina Island, just 21 miles from the mainland. The abundant scenes of swordplay are remarkably well-staged, especially considering that children are involved. Fencing master Henri Uytendaele gave the players fencing instructions and supervised the fighting.

In 1924, *Peter Pan* was uppermost on many minds. Exhibitors were contacting Paramount before a frame had been shot, wanting to know when the film would be released. *Peter Pan* was one of Paramount's "Famous 40" productions for the 1924-1925 season, which included the milestone western *The Covered Wagon*. It was known that careers would be made from that single film. One *Pan* hopeful, actress Mary Hay, wife of silent film leading man Richard Barthelmess, didn't let her loss of the role stop her grasp at stardom. Since *Peter Pan* was lost to her, she and Barthelmess produced *New Toys*, a film adaptation of a stage play that featured Hay in a very Panlike costume.

The heavy promotional campaign led to a 1924 Christmas hit, with over \$2 million being pulled in over a weekend. The film was re-released the next year to continued interest from exhibitors and audiences. But by the 1950s, *Peter Pan* was considered to be among the lost films of the Silent Era, with no negative or print to be found.

But the odyssey of the boy who wouldn't grow up didn't stop with his name on a list of lost films. The bizarre story of a mystery movie fan running films for himself in the Eastman Theater in Rochester, New York trickled down to James Card, director of the George Eastman House, one of the finest film archives in the world. His investigations led him to a cache of 35mm prints of many films on that list, including *Peter Pan*. Eastman House will occasionally lend out the film for special showings in Washington, D.C. or Los Angeles, where contemporary audiences thrill to the time-warp experience of seeing a silent film with a full orchestra playing before them. The film has become a film society favorite, with more requests for the picture than Eastman House can keep up with.

*Peter Pan* has been criticized by some contemporary critics unable to put it in its own place in time. Since Peter and Wendy are portrayed by young women, a feyness is seen in their actions when viewed through the cynical eyes of a modern moviegoer. Such an attitude causes the viewer to miss the inherent charms of Bronson's overly elegant postures and broad, pixieish smile — the very strengths that allow the film to endure as pure fantasy entertainment 70 years later.

Contemporary viewers may be surprised by the timeless pantomime that gives silent films their a unique allure for modern audiences used to dialogue and Dolby sound. Barrie's dialogue titles add to the picture's innocence:





Brenon, costars Brian and Bronson and youngsters in *Lost Boys* garb watch fencing master Henri Uytendhove cross swords with Philippe DeLacey.

MICHAEL  
At what time was I born ?  
MRS. DARLING  
At 12 o'clock at night, precious.  
MICHAEL  
Oh mummy, I hope I didn't wake you!

Or this one from an angry Peter to Tinker Bell for almost getting Wendy killed:

PETER  
Be gone from me forever! Well, if not forever, for a whole week, then.

The film's patriotic fervor may elicit giggles today. It is certainly interesting to watch the victorious children capture Hook's ship, lower the Jolly Roger and raise Old Glory in a film based on a British play. But *Peter Pan* is a cinematic fairy tale that revels in the classic tradition. It transports a modern audience into a form of entertainment that most of them probably haven't experienced before. In particular, the underground Lost Boy magic forest set, with its toadstool chairs, giant apple seats and a built-in slide for easy access, is a stunning example of storybook design.

The film made such a lasting impression on one individual who saw it in 1924 that 29 years later, when he premiered his animated version of Barrie's story, Walt Disney invited 73-year-old Herbert Brenon as a guest of honor. Brenon told the press that he en-

joyed certain aspects of the Disney version, but felt that there was more of its celebrated producer in the story than there was of Barrie. However, Brenon did feel that the cartoon portrayal of Tinker Bell, with her Marilyn Monroeish sexuality, was "absolutely magnificent." He told the *New York Times*, "That was something we had to do with just a light on the end of a wire. Cartoon is the ideal medium for portraying the role."

A genuine public appreciation for *Peter Pan* already exists due to its special showings for various charities. Film restoration and preservation have raised interest in classic films to a peak that hasn't been seen in this country since the Pop Art craze of the 1960s. Perhaps with this rebirth of interest in our cinematic past, cable and video, which have helped to restore such silent epics as *The Thief of Bagdad*, *The Ten Commandments* and *Ben Hur*, will accord the same treatment to *Peter Pan*, and allow it to join the ranks of the resurrected silents.

#### CREDITS

Adolph Zukor and Jesse L. Lasky present a Famous Players-Lasky production, distributed by Paramount Pictures; directed by Herbert Brenon; screenplay by Willis Goldbeck; photographed by James Wong Howe, ASC; technical effects, Roy Pomeroy, ASC.; fencing supervisor, Henri Uytendhove. Length, 9593 feet in 10 reels. Released December 29, 1924. *Peter Pan*, Betty Bronson; Captain Hook, Ernest Torrence; Mr. Darling, Cyril Chadwick; Tinker Bell, Virginia Brown Faire; Tiger Lily, Anna May Wong; Mrs. Darling, Esther Ralston; Nana the Dog, George Ali; Wendy, Mary Brian; Michael, Philippe DeLacey; John, Jack Murphy.



# New Products

compiled by Marji Rhea

## Teleproduction Film

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Clark explains that since Eastman EXR Primetime 640T Teleproduction film is designed for compatibility with telecine transfer systems, under normal circumstances it will reduce the time required for color grading. She also expects the new film to simplify communications between cinematographers and colorists since the images captured on the original negative will require less color correction and other image manipulation.

The Primetime film was developed in response to suggestions by TV producers and cinematographers who are facing a competitive challenge to produce high-quality programming with enhanced production values on flat or

lower budgets because of generally lower licensing fees.

"The new film can be used as a master for producing interpositives or low-contrast prints for transfer to videotape for distribution. This is important because some producers prefer using an interpositive or low-contrast print for online telecine transfer. Some overseas customers require a low-contrast print for master releases in PAL format." Clark stresses that Primetime film should not be used if there is any chance that theatrical release prints will be needed.

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A weighted, professional-quality jog/shuttle wheel provides accurate and positive control of videotape whether advancing at forward/reverse shuttle speed or jogging frame by frame. By adding a Videonics TitleMaker 2000, users can include high-quality titles in their productions as well.

Edit Suite is designed for use with all types and levels of editing equipment, improving its performance as the user upgrades the peripheral equipment. Editing accuracy is determined by the quality of the VCR connected to Edit Suite — with more advanced decks it provides higher single-frame precision.

The unit can store an EDL with up to 250 edit segments; supports Sony Control-L, Panasonic 5-pin (Control-M), RS-232, and RS-422 CVR control protocols as well as VITC, LTC and RC time codes; and has a computer interface that allows EDL export with CMX compatibility, allowing work to be edited offline



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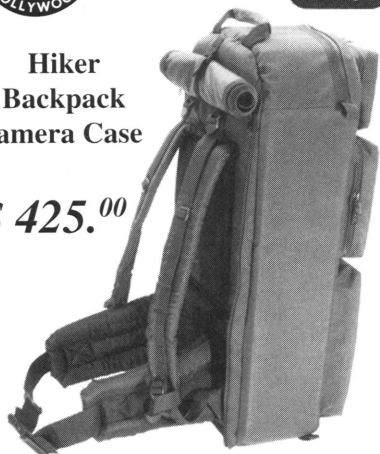


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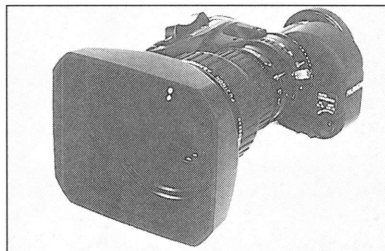
and then later transferred to more expensive online suites.

Videonics, (408) 866-8300, FAX (408) 866-4859.

### Single-ended Lamps

ILC Technology's Daymax line of single-ended lamps feature reduced chance of breakage with a collar between the base and bulb. All lamps are hot, restrikable and produce high-intensity white light.

ILC Technology, (408) 745-7900, FAX (408) 744-0829.



### Switchable Format Handheld Lenses

Fujinon's A8.5X5.5EVM and A15X8DEVM V-Grip Series handheld television zoom lenses feature the company's V-Format aspect ratio conversion technique, which compensates for reduction in angle of view when switching from the 16:9 aspect ratio to the 4:3 aspect ratio in switchable cameras. The switch for V-Format conversion is located on the extender housing along with the 2X extender.

The V-Grip Series allows zoom speed to be varied from 1 to 5 seconds from wide to tele, and adjusts from 3 to 17 degrees to ensure a comfortable wrist position for any user.

Fujinon, (201) 633-5600, FAX (201) 533-5216.

### Guide for Camera Assistants

Focal Press' *Optics and Focus for Camera Assistants* melds technical knowledge and skills with techniques and attitudes to provide key information on focusing. Assistants will learn how to apply their knowledge to any situation, rather than merely relying on tables and charts, and how to judge their performance after the shot and apply that to future situations.

Topics covered include lens function and related mechanics, optics and light theory, lens characteristics,

aberration, diffraction, lens tests, establishing and pulling focus, depth of field, formulae, focus circles, long-distance estimation, physical and mental preparation, and freelancing.

Focal Press, (800) 366-2665, FAX (800) 446-6520.

### High-Resolution Film Scanner

The Computer Film Company's fourth-generation film scanner is based on an 8K scanning chip and accepts all film formats in both 35mm and 65mm gauges, from regular 4-perf 35mm to Imax 65mm 15-perf format. The film is handled on industry-standard mechanisms for complete safety, and sits in the scanner gate exactly as it did in the camera.

Motion-controlled optics allow the scanner to be set up in minutes for any image format and resolution, up to 8K x 12K. The 8K trilinear CCD scanning array feeds a precision low-noise electronics system digitizing to 14 bits per color. Scans can be delivered on Exabyte, DAT, Metrum or Sony DIR000 tapes in any industry-standard image format.

The Computer Film Company, London, (44) 171 494 4673, FAX (44) 171 437 0490.

### 6mm Prime Lens for 16mm/Super 16, Tilt-Focus Lenses

Century Precision Optics' 6mm T1.9 lens for 16mm and Super 16 cameras focuses to one foot from the focal plane (six inches from the lens front). The lens achieves less than 3% geometric distortion at all working distances. The 14-element design includes two aspheres and makes use of extremely high-index, low-dispersion glass for drastically reduced chromatic aberration. Advanced lens coatings and construction techniques provide greatly diminished ghosting and veiling glare and ensure ideal color match with modern film lenses.

Mounted for Arri PL, Arri B, or Aaton, the prime has a front diameter of 87mm, directly compatible with Arri and Chrosziel lightweight matteboxes. A convenient, internal filter holder takes one 40.5mm filter. In addition, the lens features an expanded focus scale and linear iris, both of which are readable from ei-



ther side of the lens, and is available with either metric or English markings.

The company's tilt-focus lenses come in three focal lengths, — 24mm (T4), 45mm (T2.8), and 90mm (T2.8) — and provide 360 degrees of rotation and 8 degrees of tilt in any direction, for use in 16mm, Super 16 and 35mm cinematography.

Recently modified from Canon still lenses originally developed for the EOS system, Century Tilt-Focus lenses come in Arri PL, Arri B, and Aaton mounts. They are equipped with standard 80mm lens fronts for direct compatibility with a wide range of accessories. Other features include a linear iris and integral .8 module metric iris and focus gears.

Century Precision Optics, (818) 766-3715, FAX (818) 505-9865.

### Hollywood Camera

Hollywood Camera's 35BL Evolution upgrade for Arri 35 BL-3, 4 and 4S cameras provides a movement with a measured sound level of less than 20 decibels and a swing-over viewfinder reminiscent of the Arri 535 and the new Arri 435 camera. Most conversions can be accomplished in four weeks at the Hollywood Camera facilities in Encino.

Hollywood Camera, (818) 501-5000, FAX (818) 784-2774.

### Shadowmaster

The Magniscreen Shadowmaster lighting effects system features a set of hexagonal frames ranging from 1.6 to 5.0 feet in width and are mountable on regular C-stands, Hi-Rollers, or Senior or Combo light stands. A range of correction filters, silks and shadow effects are clipped to the frame; each frame also has a magnetic screen that accepts several solids, or cutters. The system also uses Limboflex, a material that can be shaped and fixed to the screen to adjust hot spots or create a specific look. Any effect can be changed in seconds.

Accessories include cucoloris effects, louver blinds, church windows and down and up lights. Custom effects can be manufactured as well.

Fox Gough Corporation, Sunbury-on-Thames, Middlesex, England, 01932 780291, FAX 01932 761483.

### Chyron

Chyron Corporation's Codi Pro software for its Codi and pc-Codi character generators is Windows-based and provides an easy-to-use interface. Codi Pro has three modes of operation: compose, sequence and scheduling. In the compose mode, users can preview pages they are building on a VGA monitor. After the pages have been composed, they are then sequenced. Each page is put into an order, with effects, transitions and the duration of display added. Within the scheduling mode, these pages are given a specific time to play back according to a play schedule.

Chyron Corporation, (516) 845-2103.

### Ballasts

Kino Flo's Select Ballast line of electronic ballasts for film and video fluorescent lighting operate lamps at either High Output or Standard Output. In the HO mode, the Selects operate T12 lamps, ranging in size from 15 to 48 inches, at maximum light intensity. In the Standard Output mode, the ballasts decrease the light output about half an f-stop, and stabilize the Kelvin temperature and color rendering when set temperatures rise.

Kino Flo, (818) 767-6528, FAX (818) 767-7517.

### HMI Parlight

Strand Lighting's SuperQuasar 6000W HMI Parlight uses a 6000W single-ended HMI lamp to give equivalent performance to an 18KW fresnel. SuperQuasar 60 was designed by Cinemills and weighs less than 40 pounds.

Strand Lighting, (310) 637-7500, FAX (310) 632-5519.

### Xenon Searchlight

The Xenotech Britelight SkySweep Super 10 Searchlight is a mobile 10,000-watt lighting unit designed to replace the 1940s-era carbon arc searchlight commonly used in outdoor advertising. Smaller, lighter, and brighter than the older searchlights, Xenon lights produce illumination that is close to natural light. Easy to maintain and transport, the SkySweep Super 10 utilizes a lamp with a peak beam of one billion candle power. Xenotech's proprietary, custom-built 30-inch reflector incorporates a short focal length and

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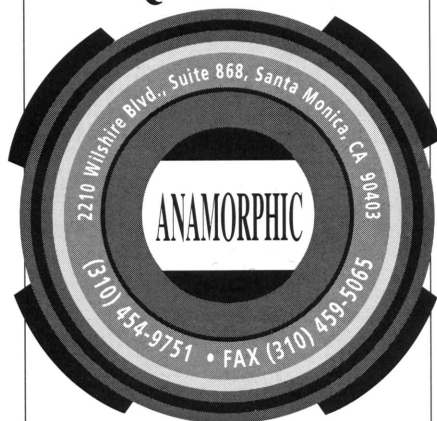


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Xenotech, (800) XENOTECH.

### Non-linear Playback

The EDI-Assist non-linear video assist system provides immediate playback access to any scene in any order and provides digital picture in a portable package.

The system was developed by the EDI division of Soundfirm from the video technology of the company's EDI-Tracker digital sound editing system. When the producers of *Babe* approached the company about a location video recorder that could be used to preview variable-speed shots for the film, the company began research and development on a mouse and keyboard-controlled unit which would meet a wide range of location and production needs.

The system offers instant and precise location of picture and sound; immediate playback of any take in any order; the ability to switch between playback and live action to match frames; a chroma key facility to verify color separation and background position; playback at variable range of frame rates; PAL or NTSC operation; Windows-based software; and compact, rugged design. EDI-Assist accepts a composite PAL or NTSC video signal from a film camera video tap or directly from a video camera. It will record audio in either mono or stereo and digitizes video and sound using standard M-JPEG hardware. Pictures are displayed on a high-quality VGA

computer monitor and composite video monitors.

The Harrison Group, (818) 379-9700.

### Silicon Graphics

Silicon Graphics Indigo2 Impact line of 3-D graphics and imaging workstations provides three times the 3-D performance and as much as 100 times the complex visualization power of Indigo2 Extreme, previously one of the fastest desktop graphics workstations. The system features texture mapping, volume rendering, HDTV resolution and professional digital media features. The graphics subsystem is driven by eight new custom-designed ASIC's designed by Silicon Graphics and manufactured by Toshiba to process 3-D graphics, imaging and photorealistic textures. The integrated imaging subsystem generates 100 million trilinear interpolations per second for visualization. This new Impact architecture also utilizes new Rambus 500MHz DRAM technology for unprecedented fill rates.

With the launch of the new system, more than a dozen third-party companies unveiled software and hardware solutions designed specifically for the Indigo2 Impact line. Impact solutions providers include Alias/Wavefront, BIOSYM, CADCentre Limited, Deneb Robotics, Discreet Logic, Fakespace, ERDAS, High Techsplanations, Landmark Graphics Corporation, MAK Technologies, MultiGen, Paradigm Simulation, Structural Dynamics Research Corporation (SDRC), and Vision International.

All Indigo2 Impact base configurations feature 64MB of memory, a 2 GB system disk, 2 MB of cache and a 19-inch monitor with 1,280-by-1,024 resolution.

Silicon Graphics, (415) 390-3233, <http://www.sgi.com/Products/Indigo2/IMPACT>.

### Fisheye Adapter

Century Precision Optics' Fisheye Adapter for 16mm, Super 16 and 35mm cinematography widens a lens' angle of view and produces an extraordinary degree of barrel distortion for an unusual wrap-around perspective, while requiring no exposure compensation.

The Super Fisheye Adapter exaggerates depth, pulling nearby objects closer and causing distant objects



to recede into the background.

Attaching the Fisheye to an 18mm lens when shooting 35mm results in an 11.5mm fisheye lens. The adapter's barrel distortion creates the appearance of an even wider angle of view. For 16mm film work, the Fisheye converts the Zeiss 8mm prime to a 5mm fisheye.

The adapter accepts one Series 9 drop-in filter between the rear of the attachment and the taking lens. A snap-in retaining ring secures the filter.

Century Precision Optics, (818) 766-3715, FAX (818) 505-9865.

### Jib

The Trovato Cam Jib, designed to handle film and video packages weighing up to 50 pounds, weighs 24 pounds and has a reach of 46 inches and a vertical travel of 4 feet. The unit is easily assembled and its head inverts for underslung operation.

Trovato Mfg., (716) 244-3310.

### Wireless Video System

Telex Communication's CamLink wireless video system comes in two models, a low-power system for EFP and a high-power system for live ENG use. Both systems feature a small, lightweight microwave transmitter that attaches to any ENG-style camera using the Anton/Bauer NP-1 or PAG battery systems.

The camera-mounted receiver of the low-powered CamLink 100 sends the camera's video, audio and timecode outputs to a compact handheld receiver that can be coupled to any monitor and/or VTR. The receiver is designed to mate directly with Sony's Video Walkman series of 8mm recorder/monitors, with the remote 8mm VTR being automatically triggered to record when the camera rolls.

The CamLink 200 system's camera mounted transmitter draws less than 600 milliamps and puts out 250 milliwatts of RF power, effectively transmitting the signal more than 300 meters. The system's one RU rack-mounted receiver can be powered by 12 volts DC or 120/220 VAC and is equipped with a triple-diversity circuit that uses three roof-mounted antennas to help eliminate multipath reflections. The signal to noise ratio is greater than 60dB.

Telex Communications, (612) 884-4051, FAX (612) 884-0043. ☐

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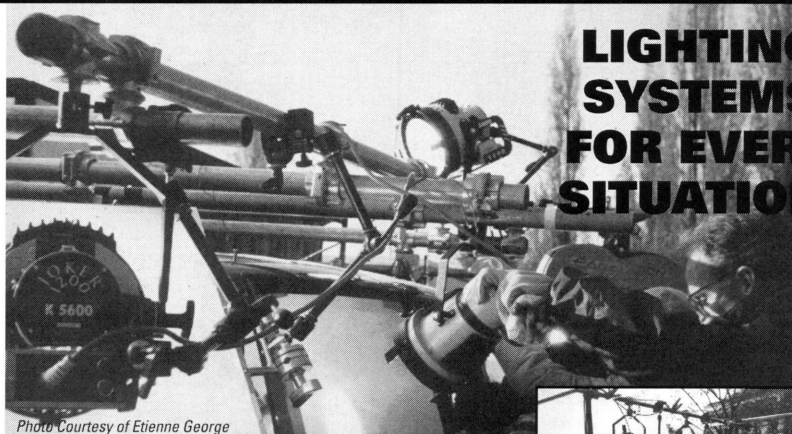
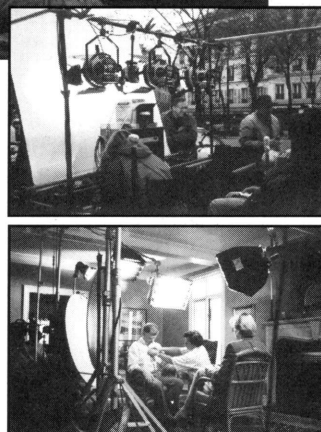
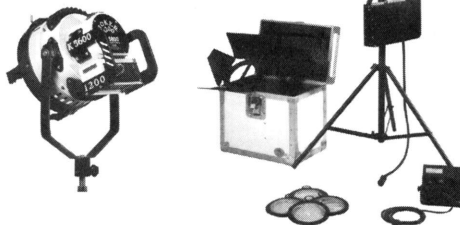


Photo Courtesy of Etienne George

Cinematographer **Owen Roizman A.S.C.** and his Gaffer **Tom Stern** specified the JOKERs while shooting on location in Paris and on the french Riviera for the **Lawrence Kasdan** film "French Kiss".

*"The multiple lighting challenges on this production were due to constant changing weather, three cameras rolling simultaneously and car shots with wide 40mm anamorphic lenses. It became clear that the traditional location equipment would make rapid lighting changes impossible, we had to research the newest equipment and found the JOKERs 200/400 and 1200. They proved very reliable and were used in all daylight scenes, from car shots on cobblestone streets to top lights pointing straight down illuminating architectural accents of the Carlton Hotel lobby and hallways. They definitely fill a void in the HMI tool category."*



Los Angeles Freelance Cameraman **John Sharaf** has used the JOKERs on almost all two camera interviews he has taped for the networks for the past two years. "I immediately recognized the production value of these small fixtures for my applications. I traveled as far as Norway for the last Winter Olympics with them, in conjunction with Chimera light banks they become the perfect portrait modeling light with still plenty of punch. They are very well adapted to the small crew with little set up time"

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## Points East

### PrimeTime Entertainment and the International Marketplace

by Brooke Comer

Global expansion is pushing the perimeters of the television distribution industry, opening up the programming market worldwide, which keeps Christina Thomas, head of New York City-based PrimeTime Entertainment Inc., very busy. The company is the North American subsidiary of Britain's PrimeTime Group, which distributes, syndicates, produces, co-produces and finances television programming internationally and offers one-stop shopping for buyers. Sellers bring anything from a completed cassette to a treatment, which Thomas can shop on a commission basis. Ideally, sellers have 50% of their funding in place from a U.S. partner, which is, according to Thomas, what a PBS or A&E network likes to see. "The only thing we don't do," she explains, "is development from the ground up. If you come in with a three-page treatment, I can tell you if it's got potential. But we don't have time to read scripts with no financing attached."

Thomas demonstrates the intricacies of how programming is bought and sold by digging out her MIP (loosely translated into International Programming Market) diary and describing the events of one of five busy days.

She had her first meeting of the day with PBS station WEDU, who had been talking to her for a year about their Jacques Cousteau, Jr. travel adventure program for kids. "We've always been interested in the project," says Thomas. "But we warned WEDU that it's hard to sell a hosted show to an international market. Cousteau, Jr. is French, and it's hard to dub a talking head. Every country wants a host of their own nationality." Since she last met with them, Thomas had screened WEDU's pilot and was impressed. Now the task of contacting home video companies and raising money for production looms ahead. "This is not a slow process," she explains. "This is normal. I hope that when I see

them again, I'll not only have seen a complete episode, but I'll know where the next 13 will be placed worldwide. But that won't be for at least six months."

To place the Cousteau episodes, Thomas will try to get presales and co-productions. "You'll get more money from a given country if you get them involved early, before the project is completed," she observes. "But in return for that money, you have to offer them something unique to beat out the competition. They'd pre-buy a Pavarotti concert if it was a one-off. Or they'll come in as co-producers to have creative input."

At her next meeting, Thomas found herself talking to two young Australian producers. She'd met them at MIP last year and put some money into their first project, which they delivered last March. Now they have a period project based on a real-life event about an Australian prison break launched by a group of Americans. It has all the essentials of a co-production and it's historical. "I'll take it to American Experience and the History Channel," says Thomas. At the same time, her London office will pitch it to U.K. broadcasters.

When Thomas moved to her next meeting, she found an American producer, still in the outline stage, with another period film about the life of a woman who was both model and mistress to many Impressionist painters. "He envisioned a four-hour project, but I convinced him that TV movie-length would be better," says Thomas, whose company is putting in one-third of the budget and planning sales in the rest of the world. "They'd like to shoot it in a French-owned studio in Eastern Europe, and we could bring in the Canadians and make it a French/Canadian co-production, which would help everyone on content and quota."

Thomas moved on to a meeting with the USA Network, "which was



more informational, to find out what the criteria were for movies these days." She found out that USA was interested in films featuring strong women, because market research showed women to be a stronger audience than men, whose shorter attention spans are satisfied with music video and sports programming. These films could also be historical, "which is a huge challenge," Thomas points out, "since women weren't given much chance to be strong 100 years ago."

At her next meeting with Questar, the Chicago-based home video company, Thomas discussed the possibility of a partnership to produce a series of movies. "The nice thing about these meetings," says Thomas, "is the mutual-ity." Questar had a project in development that needed exposure, and they invited Thomas to take a look at it.

After lunch, Thomas continued her search for completed projects, but found few. "I talked to Polish TV and their material is always beautiful, but the minute you get anyone specific to one nationality talking to a camera, you've lost your worldwide audience." She also spoke to several French companies and screened their programs. "We get quite a bit of animation from overseas," she notes, "which is wonderful because it's easy to dub."

Then came an independent producer from the U.K. with a travel series. "I'd met her before at NAPTE, and I already knew that Disney and Turner couldn't do it and the Travel Channel didn't have enough money. But I'm happy to see that PBS is bringing back the Travel Series from WNET, so I'm taking it to them."

Will budget cuts hit PBS hard? "I think a lot of the big PBS stations already have some underwriting in place and they took these cuts as an incentive to go out and find money," Thomas observes. "I believe there is room for PBS, and that corporations will get behind them. They may need to be more accommodating in terms of what they'll allow the corporations to do. There may have to be some civilized compromises that let the corporation get something in return. But I do think PBS will survive. There are too many wonderful people there who will keep the programming standards high. And I think that reflects that state of the industry now. That's why I'm optimistic."

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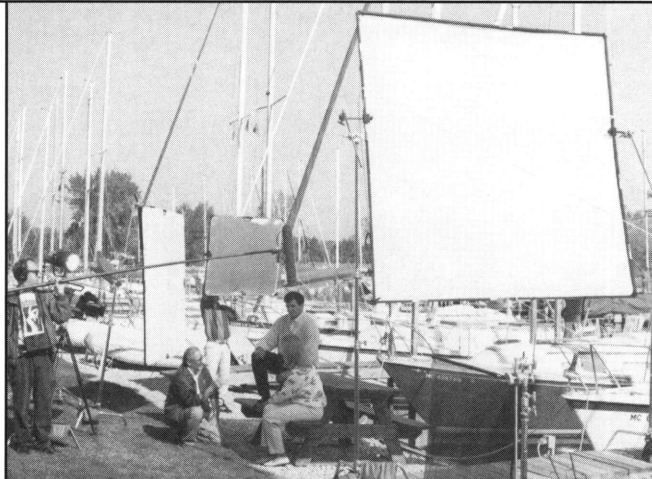


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University of Oklahoma Press,  
400 pps., cloth

John Ford was a hard man to pigeonhole. In interviewing many who knew him, Davis comes up with many opinions. John Wayne: "A rock of strength for his friends and acquaintances." Frank Baker: "There was a man, in my estimation; he had the touch of greatness." Dorothy Lamour: "That man could charm the apples out of a tree." Andy Devine: "To have known John Ford and to have worked for him was to have loved him." George Peppard: "The difference between John Ford and other directors is the difference between Gulliver and the little people who tied him down." And Katharine Hepburn was in love with him for years.

On the other hand, quoth Robert Wagner: "He was just tyrannical. . . a miserable son of a bitch." Ken Murray: ". . . a monster on the set. . . an ogre; I was scared of him." Dorris Bowdon: "He was a demon, I was his victim." Eddie Albert: "If you stuck your neck out, he'd cut you down." Pandro S. Berman: ". . . about the meanest man I ever met." William Clothier, ASC: ". . . socially you never wanted any part of him — he just wasn't that pleasant."

Despite persistent alcoholism, a violent temperament and health problems, Ford produced a huge volume of work. Most famous are his Westerns, which are in a class apart. He began making two-reel oaters at Universal in 1917, later graduating to big ones like *The Iron Horse*, *Stagecoach*, *My Darling Clementine*, *Fort Apache*, *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, and *The Searchers*. But equally fine are mainstream works such as *Arrowsmith*, *The Informer*, *The Lost Patrol*, *Young Mr. Lincoln*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *How Green Was My Valley*, *The Fugitive*, *The Quiet Man*, etc. And guess who directed that W.W. II stomach-churner, *Sex Hygiene*, which was produced by Darryl Zanuck, photographed by

George Barnes, ASC and edited by Gene Fowler Jr.? The filmography lists them all in a book that ranks high in the Ford bibliography.

### George Cukor, Master of Elegance

by Emanuel Levy  
William Morrow, 464 pps.,  
hardback, \$25

Anyone who met George Cukor had to be impressed with his energy, enthusiasm and almost incessant chatter. He could have sold ice cubes to Eskimos. In this expansive biography, Levy quotes Claudette Colbert on how Cukor lured her to participate in the film *Zaza* (which ended up being a disaster due to censorship problems): "He came into my dressing room and told me what a great play it was, how it had always been a vehicle for stars and blah, blah, blah. . . He really knew how to talk you into things." Also, Deborah Kerr: "He would talk and talk and talk about a particular scene, and then say, 'Now forget everything I've said and go and do it your way.'"

Cukor had an ability to talk his players into first-rate performances. He had great rapport with actresses, with whom he usually was gentle but could be very nasty. During the 1930s, when women stars dominated, he became typecast as "the women's director," which he felt hampered his career. Another problem was the open secret of his homosexuality. Actually, he had little to complain about: after a successful career in the theater his film work began at Paramount in 1929 and lasted until 1981, with many triumphs and occasional misfires along the way. His versatility gave us *A Bill of Divorcement*, *Dinner at Eight*, *Little Women*, *David Copperfield*, *The Philadelphia Story*, *The Women*, *A Woman's Face*, *Gaslight*, *A Double Life*, *Born Yesterday* and *My Fair Lady*. The latter won Oscars for Best Picture and Best Director. He directed 10 of Katharine Hepburn's films. James Stewart, Ingrid Bergman, Ronald Colman, Judy Holliday



and Rex Harrison all won Oscars in his pictures.

Kukor focused on performers above art and technical matters. Giving his cinematographers creative freedom yielded strong visuals, such as those achieved by Joseph Ruttenberg, ASC in *Gaslight* and Milton Krasner, ASC in *A Double Life*. His great disappointment was being fired from *Gone With the Wind* by David Selznick.

Levy covers all of this in rich detail, backed up by more than 100 interviews with Kukor's friends and co-workers, in this fine tribute to one of the movies' brightest talents.

#### Addenda:

In Bill Watterson's great cartoon strip "Calvin and Hobbes," six-year-old Calvin comes to the realization that "the purpose of writing is to inflate weak ideas, obscure poor reasoning, and inhibit clarity. With a little practice," he adds, "writing can be an intimidating and impenetrable fog!" He titled his first-grade book report "The Dynamics of Interbeing and Monological Imperatives in 'Dick and Jane': A Study in Psychic Transrelational Gender Modes."

This thinking is evident in an increasing number of books we receive for review. Written in a style utilized in academic circles, they engender frustration in more down-to-earth readers. To regale us with outmoded Freudian or Jungian reasoning as to what some director is "really saying" is a poor substitute for giving us some facts. One lengthy treatise on *The Most Dangerous Game* concludes that what the picture is really about is the opening and closing of doors! It is not beyond the vanity of some writers to coin and relentlessly pursue original words they deem necessary to an understanding of their unique ideas, an ego trip that must end in a crash when the new term fails to gain entry in the next edition of Webster's.

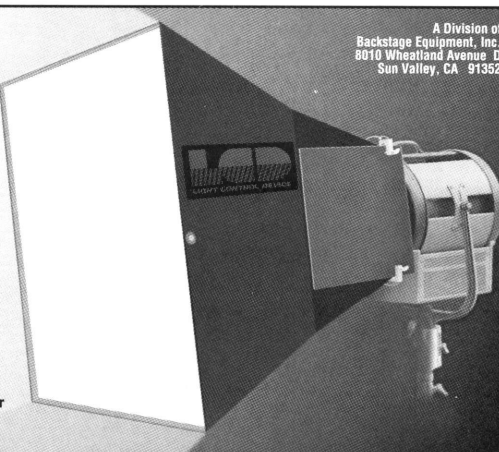
Often these books derive from dissertations, which require this mode of presentation, or are written by professors for their peers. Well and good. But what if the writer goes to a mainstream publisher in a bid to reach the multitudes beyond the perimeters of academia? In this event, the publisher should tell the author to rewrite it so it will make sense to its wider audience. Also, why not move the information in those 40 pages of footnotes into the main text? ☛

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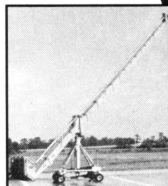
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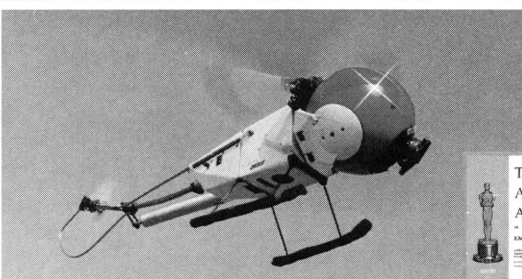
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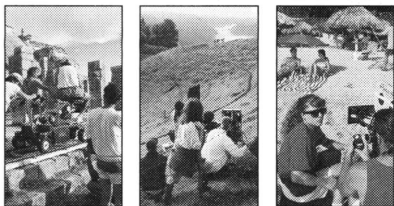
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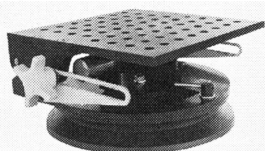
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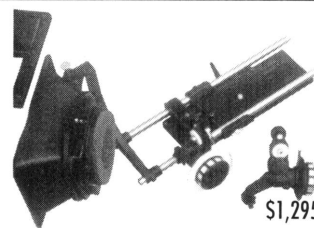
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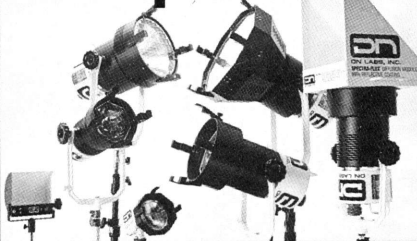
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## From the Clubhouse

The ASC's newest member is Michael Chapman, who followed six years as Gordon Willis' operator on such films as *The Godfather* and *Klute* with a career as director of photography for such diverse pictures as *The Last Detail*, *The Last Waltz*, *White Dawn*, *The Front*, *The Next Man*, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, *Hardcore*, *The Wanderers*, *Personal Best*, *The Lost Boys*, *Rising Sun*, *Scrooged* and *Shoot to Kill*. Chapman grew up in New England and went to the movies "obsessively" as a youngster. "However, I never dreamed about making films — it wouldn't have occurred to me that it was something ordinary human beings could do," he remarked to *AC* in 1981, the year he earned an Oscar nomination for his startling black-and-white cinematography in director Martin Scorsese's *Raging Bull*. He had previously been nominated for Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* and would be honored again for *The Fugitive*. Chapman cites Willis as a key influence on his approach to cinematography, commenting, "I learned from him that filmmaking was a serious business. It's not just something you learn — a series of tricks you can repeat by rote. You have to be thinking all the time, and thinking hard."

Also new to the ASC is Associate Member Garrett Smith, Executive Director of Videotape Operations at Paramount Pictures, where he has worked closely with cinematographers, directors and producers in the transfer of films to video. In addition to the work of ASC members Woody Omens, John Bailey, Stephen Burum, Michael Chapman, Curtis Clark, Jordan Cronenweth, Adam Greenberg, Robbie Greenberg, Conrad Hall, Laszlo Kovacs, Matthew Leonetti, Vittorio Storaro, Gordon Willis and Vilmos Zsigmond, Smith has worked on

the transfer of many old films by past ASC members.

His past career includes posts as Director of Postproduction-Ancillary/TV Syndication at New World Pictures, Postproduction Supervisor on *Ripley's Believe It or Not*, Postproduction Manager of Filmed Television at Columbia Pictures, Manager of the Network Film Department at CBS Television Network, and Assistant Production Manager on the animated feature *Lord of the Rings*.



Richard Edlund, ASC, president and founder of Boss Film Studios and four-time Academy Award winner, has been elected to the Board of Governors of the visual effects branch of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

"Having branch status at the Academy gives a new level of prestige to the visual effects industry," says Edlund. "I'm honored to have been nominated and elected to the board."



Brianne Murphy, ASC was one of the honorees at the 2nd Annual Women in Film Lucy Awards Luncheon on September 9. The Lucy Award for Innovation in Television, established in memory of Lucille Ball, is given to individuals — actors, writers, producers, directors, or other creative artists — who exemplify the vision and accomplishment embodied in the life and work of that comedienne, creator, producer, studio owner and innovator. This year's other recipients are Imogene Coca, the late Elizabeth Montgomery, Fred Silverman and Tracey Ullman. The 1994 recipients were Gary David Goldberg and Linda Bloodworth Thompson.



## The Black Room



THE MOVIE BUSINESS HAS SURVIVED many a crisis during the past century. In the summer of 1935, when this photo was snapped, America was in the darkest part of the Great Depression, the Dust Bowl era was in full swing, and war clouds were forming over the world. As for Hollywood: film censorship had become op-

pressive, major studios were going into receivership and theaters were being shuttered everywhere. But (to grab a handy cliché), when the going gets tough the tough get going, and what is now called a Golden Age of cinema emerged during the tumultuous Thirties.

The castle shown here

stood for many years on the now-extinct 40-acre backlot at what was then the RKO-Pathé Studio, in Culver City. The front lot is still a very busy place under its present name, Culver City Studios. The castle appeared in many a costume drama, both silent and talking, including some DeMille epics, *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, *The Man in the Iron Mask*, and scores more. It perished during the burning of Atlanta for *Gone With the Wind*.

Here, at work on *The Black Room* for Columbia, is director of photography Allen G. Siegler, ASC, who is setting up a scene with principals Thurston Hall, Boris Karloff and Marian Marsh. Standing behind Siegler is operative cameraman Fayte M. Brown, and next to the camera is assistant cameraman Gert Anderson. Both Brown and Anderson later became directors of photography and members of the ASC. Also employed on this distinguished costume drama were the great matte painter and visual effects cinematographer, Jack Cosgrove, ASC and E. Roy Davidson, ASC, who made the process shots.

The genial British director, Roy William Neill, holds Tor, the huge great dane who does in the villainous Karloff in the last reel. Because Karloff portrays twins in the picture, Siegler executed a number of flawless in-camera split-screen shots. Among the many charms of *The Black Room* is an elaborate musical score by Louis Silvers, Milan Roder and Rex Bassett that includes a lovely song, "Love is Like Music," and a great piece of chase music called "Hell-Bent for Election," which Columbia subsequently used in many other pictures. — George Turner



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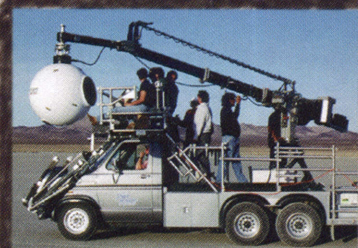
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